Henry M. Dexter.

TWELVE

DISCOURSES.

BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THESE discourses have been printed, not because of any presumed special demand upon public attention in their character, but because it was thought that their issue in this form might add something to the net profits of an effort upon which reliance is had for the full completion of a long struggling, but now nearly successful enterprise. Their selection has been determined by various personal wishes and considerations, which need not be mentioned here. That the blessing of God may rest upon every reader is their Author's prayer.

HILLSIDE, ROXBURY, October 23, 1860.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	There is a God	1
II.	The whole Bible, or none	33
III.	Repentance alone insufficient	55
IV.	The way of Salvation	72
V.	The Conversion of the Ethiop	92
VI.	The Conversion of Zaccheus	102
VII.	The Conversion of Lydia	114
VIII.	Good Intentions	129
IX.	Good and Faithful Service	142
X.	Faith the Measure of Success	165
XI.	Christ and the Common People	180
XII.	The Lord the Builder	205

I.

THERE IS A GOD.*

HEBREWS III: 4.

EVERY HOUSE IS BUILDED BY SOME MAN; BUT HE THAT BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD.

Lord Bacon says, "God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it." I believe this to be true, and I have felt that it might strengthen our convictions of the Divine existence, and of the duties which it involves, if we were to consider more in detail than it has been usual for writers, or preachers, to do, that argument for God which is found in the common facts and daily experiences of ordinary life.

Bear in mind that the question is not whether we can establish the being of a God by evidence which nobody can possibly object to, but whether we can do it by evidence against which no *valid* objection can be brought. An ingenious man can suggest objections to any thing; and therefore an objection proves nothing until it is found to overmaster opposing considerations.

* Preached in the Pine Street Church, Boston, (Sabbath Evening,) November 18th, 1855.

Nor, is the question whether we can demonstrate a Supreme Being with *absolute certainty;* for nothing can be demonstrated with such absolute certainty that it shall not be possible for the fertile mind to imagine some opposite possibility. But the question is, Is there such and so much evidence of the being of God, as to amount to an *efficient certainty:* such a certainty as we are accustomed to demand and rely upon in all the common acts of life; such as it would be folly and madness to resist?

Thus clearly comprehending the point to be proved, let us glance a moment at the nature of the argument on which it will be natural and necessary for us to depend in its demonstration. We must rely, in the first place, upon the five senses to put us in possession of the facts upon which our proposition will rest. We must rely, in the second place, upon testimony to enlarge our own personal cognizance of such facts, by the added experience of others. We must rely, in the third place, upon common sense to supply such principles as may be necessary to link those facts together. And, in the last place, we must rely upon reasoning to frame those facts and principles into a bridge of argument, which will carry us securely and strongly over from the known result to the unknown cause.

The two main principles, from the domain of common sense, on which it is needful to rely, in such an argument, are, that every effect must have a cause, and that every cause implies the presence of mind. So vital are these to the result, that I shall pause a moment to develop more fully their nature and reliability, before proceeding further.

I wish to move my hand to my head. It moves as I would have it. Now in this I am conscious of an act of will, and I am also conscious of a bodily motion following that act of will; and my common sense tells me that the volition was the cause of the motion. I plunge a bar of cold iron into the white heat of a forge; it soon reddens, and glows, and softens. My common sense tells me that the fire is the cause of the heat of the bar. I get upon a locomotive which is standing, with steam up, upon the rails. I open the valve which admits that steam to the cylinders, and the machinery starts, and the engine rushes along the track. My common sense tells me that my act was the cause of that motion. I visit Donald McKay's ship-yard at East Boston. I find the "Great Republic" on the stocks just ready to be launched. I know that she was not always there. I know that she did not grow there, as the corn grows in the field. I know that she was put together there, piece by piece, by ship-carpenters and others. I know that Donald McKay showed those workmen how to place each stick, and that it was the model which he fashioned which made her a sharp clipper ship, and not a broad-bottomed barge. My common sense tells me that Donald McKay's skill, is the cause of that huge vessel.

Thus, I invariably come back from all such observations to the original suggestion which my common sense impresses upon my mind concerning them, that there is a law of cause and effect: so that when I see any thing effected, I cannot help inferring that it had a cause. I pick up a little cog-wheel upon a surf-beach. I at once feel that it did not grow there in that form,—

that it had a cause other than the waves and the sand. I know that man made it, and made it for some use; that, in his thought, it had place in some machine. I pick up a round pebble that was lying by its side. I at once feel concerning that, also, that it did not receive its shape and character from that spot. I attribute its roundness to the attrition of the waves, which, for centuries, perhaps, have been grinding it upon their gravelly bed. Now, in these judgments, I am perfectly reasonable. I strain no point. I follow the natural and necessary processes of my mind. If I cannot rightly infer that order, organization, effect, imply, by an absolute necessity, a cause, — and that every cause energized, will result in an effect, then I cannot reason at all — nay, I cannot utter another sound, for as I am speaking to you now, I am proceeding upon the supposition that the action of my will, as a cause, upon certain muscles which I am using about the lungs and throat, will produce certain sounds, as an immediate effect, and that those sounds will carry over certain ideas to you, and awaken certain convictions in you, as an ultimate effect.

Equally imperative is the original suggestion of my common sense, that every cause implies the action of mind. You find it impossible to believe that the cog-wheel is not the result of contrivance; fixing the number and size of the teeth, and shaping the whole for its place with other wheels. If a man tells you you do not know this, because you cannot prove it, you naturally reply; It needs not that I prove how it came on this beach, and what man made it, since my common sense obliges me to believe that some man made it, and made

it because some mind contrived it. And with regard to those causes which take place under what we call the laws of nature, and which, at first glance, do not so immediately suggest and demand mind as inseparable from them, we reason thus. True, I might perhaps, conceive of one pebble, as being rounded by the action of the waves, accidentally, and as the result of no plan, but when I observe that millions of pebbles are, in the same way, rounded by the action of the waves, I cannot help inferring that there is some reason why the rolling of the surf upon the shore should always tend to make pebbles smooth and round; nay, that there must be some reason why the surf rolls upon the shore; and thus I am carried back until I reach a plan; and that plan compels me to the conviction of some mind planning; and so, wherever I find an effect, I am driven to infer a cause; and wherever I find a cause, I am driven to infer a causing mind. So universal and absolute is the working of these convictions in the human soul, that even the skeptic who tries to deny them, cannot help acting upon them. Stand behind him while his mouth is open with an argument against them, and touch his shoulder with your finger, and see if he does not turn to find who touched him; to ask what is wanted. He cannot help inferring that some person was the cause of the finger-pressure which he felt, and that that person had a cause for his act.

These preliminaries being settled, and the way clear before us — knowing exactly what we have to prove, and by what process of argument the work may be logically brought to a result of efficient certainty — we are ready to commence the demonstration.

And, for the sake at once of grouping together our facts, for more easy remembrance, and of gaining practical force for the argument, I propose to imagine a day in the ordinary life of a mechanic — say a machinist, — and as we follow him along its hours and labors, to develop such considerations in proof of the Divine existence, as naturally suggest themselves in that connection.

I imagine him first as waking at dawn. As his eyes open, and he gains full consciousness, his first feeling is one of refreshment from slumber. He went to bed exhausted, with aching muscles, and a throbbing head, from his yesterday's over-exertion. He now feels fresh and vigorous; his muscles are supple, his head clear. What is the cause of this grateful change? Sleep. But what is sleep, and how comes sleep to refresh a tired man?

Sleep is the resting of the brain. Every voluntary motion of the body, and every thought of the mind is the result of an act of the brain, giving off nervous force to the nervous system. The consequence is, that a long day's work, with its innumerable mental acts, and bodily motions, exhausts the concentrated stock of nervous energy, and sensations of weariness and torpor follow. The eyes close, the muscles relax, those bodily movements, which depend upon volition, cease; the brain has nothing to do, until morning, and rests — secreting a new stock of nervous energy for the uses of to-morrow. The process is somewhat analogous to that by which the little brook is sometimes made to turn the great water-wheel. A dam is thrown across its ravine, and, during the night, when the miller has no corn to

grind, the pond fills up. At morning it is full, and all the day it whirls the millstones merrily, till it is all run out at night, and the mill sleeps to let it fill up again.

Now this matter of sleeping, and waking refreshed, taken in connection with the fact that hours of daylight, which invite to labor, and which are enough to exhaust the accumulated energy of the brain, and hours of darkness, which invite to sleep, and which are enough to recruit that stock of nervous energy again, are constantly succeeding each other, develops a law under which men live. It is an effect; just as clearly the contrivance of a mind, as the mill-pond and the mill. So that the mechanic, as he sleeps and wakes again, demonstrates the existence of a mind which arranged that process for him, and for all men. That mind we call God.

Our mechanic rises, and, perceiving that the morning gives promise of a day of greater heat than yesterday, lays aside the warm woolens in which he was then clad, and dresses himself in cooler linens. But how comes it that woolen is warm, and linen cool? The shortest and simplest answer is, that it is found, as a matter of fact, to be a law, that woolen is a slow conductor of heat, and linen a good conductor; so that clothes made of woolen, retain and so augment the heat of the body, and clothes made of linen, conduct it quickly off, and so give rise to the sensation of coolness. If this were so in one case alone, it would be a pleasant fact, but when we find it to be always so, it develops another effect; it announces itself as the result of mind; and that mind we call God.

Our machinist sits down to his morning meal. He

is hungry, and he eats and drinks, and rises invigorated, and feeling now fully equal to the labors of the day. But what is hunger, and how came he to be hungry; and what are eating and drinking, and how come they to satisfy hunger, and impart strength? Hunger is that uneasiness of a healthy stomach when empty, which gives notice that it needs food; just as some contrivances indicate when a steam boiler is out of water. Eating and drinking are mechanical processes which introduce the needed food into the stomach — as the engineer pumps a supply into the boiler when the water is scant, and throws coal in through the furnace door when the fire is low.

Let us now inquire exactly whence comes the feeling of faintness in hunger, and how this process of introducing food into the stomach takes away that feeling of faintness, and imparts the feeling of strength?

During the twenty-four hours of each day, the body of a healthy man of average size, breathes at least three thousand gallons of air; gives off, in the air exhaled, some three pounds of carbonic acid, and the same weight of water; and throws off also several ounces of the waste particles of its own substance, and of undigested matter. Moreover, in order to keep up the animal heat of the body to its natural temperature of about 98°, it is necessary that there should be a constant combustion (without flame) going on within, by which the starch, sugar, and fat of the food, are — so to speak — burned into the carbonic acid and water which escape in the breath. Still further, in order to supply the constant waste which is caused to the body by the act of living — which uses it up, much as burning uses up

the oil in a lamp — it is necessary that a large quantity of fibrin, and albumen, be furnished by the blood to take the place of that which is withdrawn, and so to prevent emaciation and death. We have then a constant draft going on, in the simple performance of the ordinary functions of life, which takes out of the blood at every moment, and with every breath and bodily motion, certain quantities of fibrin, gluten, fat, and sugar, which are the essential elements that the body uses in its growth, and for its daily work: by which, on the one hand, by burning a part of them into carbonic acid and water, it maintains the bodily heat; and, by which, on the other, it repairs its own daily decay, and energizes its own constant motions. To furnish this fibrin, gluten, fat, and sugar, from without, is, of course, a frequent necessity. Hunger and thirst notify us when the stock within is getting scant, and eating and drinking introduce the fresh supply. Our survey of this part of the animal economy would be incomplete, however, if we did not notice the manner in which the miscellaneous food eaten, is converted into the exact materials required for the manufacture of strength within.

Our mechanic eats — we will suppose — a beef-steak for his breakfast. That beef-steak contains, in every 100 parts, 78 parts of water and blood, 19 parts of fibrin, and 3 parts of fat. The wheat bread which he eats with it, contains 45 parts of water, 6 of gluten, 1 of fat, and 48 of starch. The potato contains 8 parts of gluten, and 92 of starch and water. The coffee which he drinks with it, contains 12 parts of water, $15\frac{1}{2}$ of sugar, 13 of gluten, 13 of fat, and the rest of woody fibre, etc. The milk contains 35 parts of gluten,

or *casein*, 24 of fat, and 37 of starch and sugar. Thus it will be seen that the various articles which he eats, under different forms and combinations, all contain very nearly the same essential elements, and those the very elements which are needed to support life. But how are these elements to be separated and applied internally to the uses of the body?

In the first place, by the operation of chewing, the food is ground fine, and diluted with saliva. This saliva, of which more than one pound's weight is usually manufactured by the glands and swallowed with the food every day, contains salt, and alkali, and a substance called ptyalin, which has the property of changing starch into sugar. The food thus ground and diluted, is deposited in the stomach by the act of swallowing. Here, at a temperature of 98°, it is digested, the starch is converted by the ptyalin into sugar, the fat is subdivided into exceedingly minute globules, the fibrin and gluten are dissolved, and the whole mass is softened by the operation of the gastric juice, aided by the heat of the stomach, until it is reduced to a greyish substance, of the consistency and appearance of gruel, which is called chyme. Some of this is absorbed through the coats of the stomach as soon as it is produced, so that the process of nourishment begins almost as soon as the food is swallowed, and one part, thus absorbed, keeps up the strength while the rest undergoes further necessary processes. The unabsorbed mass passes on from the stomach through its outlet, into the duodenum — so called — where three new liquids flow in upon it, namely, the bile from the liver, the pancreatic juice, and a mucus secreted by the duodenum it-

self. The bile removes the acidity of the chyme, and corrects its tendency to fermentation. The pancreatic juice continues the conversion of starch into sugar, and still further digests the fatty globules, in which it is aided by the third fluid. As the result of the action of the three, the grey chyme becomes changed into a milky liquid called chyle. This chyle flows on through the small intestines, which gradually drink it up through their lacteal glands, and carry it along to the thoracic duct in which they all meet, and through which they all pour the chyle they have absorbed into the jugular vein, where it mingles with the blood, and by the action of the heart is forced forward through the lungs, and thence takes the circuit of the body through the arteries; carrying its fresh stock of fibrin, gluten, fat, and sugar, to all those parts of the body which need it to supply their waste, or to keep up the animal heat, or for any other purpose.

Clearly this process by which food is first prepared to nourish the body by mastication and the action of saliva, and digestion with the gastric fluid, and the bile, and the pancreatic juice, and the intestinal mucus, each having its own chemical peculiarity, and doing its own special work, and by which it is thus passed along from the teeth to the heart and arteries, and then, as it flows on through the circulation, is taken up wherever it is needed for the repair of damages, and the supply of the daily waste of the body; this process is just as clearly a contrivance, as a cotton factory which takes in raw cotton and turns out sheeting; and if the cotton factory argues a contriver, so does this process compel us to infer a designing mind as its cause; which mind we call God.

Having breakfasted, our machinist walks to the shop to commence his day's work. But what is walking, and how comes he to be able to walk? It is the conveyance of the body from place to place, by first throwing its weight upon one foot and advancing that which is free, and then throwing the weight upon the other, and advancing the former, and so on. The limb which sustains the body is stiffened for that purpose by the tension of certain of its muscles, and the limb which is thrown forward is advanced by the contraction of certain of its muscles, by which, in connection with the hinge joints of the thigh, and knee, and ankle, the compound progressive motion is attained. These muscles are made to contract by the excitement of a nerve imbedded in them, and that excitement is produced by an impulse dispatched from the brain along the spinal marrow to the appropriate nerve. And the body is kept perpendicular through all the complicated motions of walking, by constant impulses — unconscious to us now, but very conscious when we were learning to walk — from the brain to different nerves, appropriately moving appropriate muscles, and so seasonably counteracting any sideway tendency.

Now, if a telegraphic dispatch were sent to a shipmaster, and in obedience to it he should navigate his vessel — by pulling her ropes, and changing her sails as the wind required, and by the constant steerage of her helm, — from India wharf in Providence, to India wharf in Boston, you would say, at once, there must be mind and contrivance there. So there must be mind behind this arrangement for the navigation of a human body from one spot to another, in obedience to the tele-

graphic dispatches of the brain. And that mind we call God.

Our machinist now takes up his morning task. We will suppose him to be turning out some delicate and important piece of machinery in a lathe, with the pattern before him. Having adjusted the lathe so that it will advance and cut away so much of the iron as is needed, he leaves it, for a few moments, to work unwatched. A single false movement would ruin the piece. How does he know that no such false movement will take place in his absence? Because it is a law of such a lathe to turn truly according to its exact adjustment. But how came it to be a law that it should turn truly, instead of untruly? And how came it to be a law that steel should always be harder than iron, so that the small steel chisel will shave off the iron as it turns against it, as a knife cuts a pine stick? And how came it to be a law that a machine made exactly according to its design, in parts, will resemble that design when put together? Here is contrivance every where; mind back of all that our machinist puts his hand unto to do.

His lathe is turned by a steam-engine. But how comes it to be a law of water to boil and give off steam, always at 212°? And how comes it to be a law that this steam can always be condensed into water again? And why does steam always have expansive power? And how comes it to be a law that iron and copper boiler-plates have sufficient strength and tenacity to resist and retain the force of the steam, long enough to make it useful in the engine? And how comes the atmosphere always to furnish a resistance of exactly 15

pounds to the square inch — no more, no less, — to the movement of the piston? And how comes it to be a law that wood and coal will burn and heat the boiler, while stones and sand are incombustible? There is but one answer; all is the fruit of design — every thing fits together; and as a builder could not find stone, and bricks, and lumber of all sorts, and hardware, and glass, and all the materials for a house, piled upon a vacant lot, each in its exact proportion, and of the right quality, and all ready to go together into an edifice, without concluding that some mind was behind it all, intending a house, so no man can look at these details, and their mutual adaptations, without concluding that a mind intending human life and human industry is behind it all. That mind we call God.

I insist upon it, that our machinist cannot select any thing that he sees around him, which shall not conduct him, by its own individual necessity, straight to the same grand conclusion. He himself and his skill, he cannot account for, without demonstrating a God. How comes it that his labor will now earn him, perhaps, twenty-five dollars a week, while ten years ago it would not yield him a dollar a day? Because he is more skillful now. But what is skill? It is the product of ingenuity and experience, by which a man is constantly improving as a workman; by the use of new processes, and by recollecting all his old errors, to shun them, and all his old excellencies, to improve upon them. But whence come these laws of memory and forecast, making experience and ingenuity possible to man? We get but the old answer, carrying us, here as before, back to that contriving mind, which we call God.

Take the metals upon which he works. How does it happen that iron when heated becomes soft, and can be shaped and welded, and drawn out into wire; that if heated further, it melts and takes the shape of its mould in cooling? How does it happen that always when mixed with one and one half per cent. of carbon, it makes steel? And how does it happen that if you heat steel red hot and plunge it in cold water, it becomes hard enough to scratch glass; while if you heat and cool it slowly, it will be soft as iron? How does it happen that at different degrees of hardness it has different colors; so that steel of a straw yellow is just right for razors, and steel of a deep blue just right for sword-blades, and saws, and watch-springs?

How does it happen that zinc always has a specific gravity of 7; copper, of nearly 9; lead, of almost $11\frac{1}{2}$; silver, of $10\frac{1}{2}$; gold, of 19; and platinum, of 22? How comes it that 2 parts of copper united with 1 part of zinc, always make brass? that 90 parts of copper and 10 of tin, always make bronze? that 92 of copper and 8 of tin, always make gun-metal? that 80 of copper and 20 of tin, always make bell-metal? that 4 of lead and 1 of antimony, always make type-metal?

How does it happen that water always freezes at 32° above zero, and mercury at 39° below it? that alcohol boils at 173° degrees, and water at 212°? that tin always melts at 451°; lead, at 633°; silver at 1873°; gold, at 2016°, and cast iron at 2786°?

Why is it that there is such an *invariableness* about those methods by which all these metals are wrought for use? Why, for example, when a foundryman has tested different processes for melting his iron, and dif-

ferent kinds of sand for making his molds, until he has fixed upon what he considers best, does he always try exactly to repeat those best processes? How does he know that what is once best, will always be best?

Only one answer is possible: there is LAW everywhere. It is a law that like causes shall produce like results, and man, and metals, and nature itself, obey that law. But who made it? who impressed it upon the universe?

The truth is, that the machinist cannot intelligently look upon a single process of his daily work, a single material which he uses in it, nay, upon any single thing which he sees in it, without being carried straight back to the conviction of some cause for all the principles and facts on the due knowledge and just use of which, his own success depends; without feeling that if his completed locomotive demonstrates to any but a fool, some mind as its contriver and constructer, much more do the materials and laws by which its contriver and constructer were able to build it, demonstrate a mind as their cause. So that whether he think of it or not, he never strikes a blow of his hammer, without proving the being of a God.

But let us suppose our machinist to have finished his day's task, and to walk out as the evening shadows begin to lengthen, till he reaches the green fields. The freshness of nature charms his eye, and the sweet air is grateful to his lungs. But how comes nature to affect his soul, and what makes the air from green fields pleasanter to his lungs, than the dusty breath of the paved streets?

Nature affects his soul in this wise. The sunlight is reflected from the herbage and foliage, upon the outer

convex lens, or aqueous humor of the eye, which passes it through the circular aperture of the iris to the inner convex lens or crystalline humor, which concentrates all the scattered rays into a beautifully clear miniature of that which is without, upon the retina or expansion of the optic nerve lying behind it. This nerve, passing out through the back of the eye, carries the sensation of this miniature, straight to the brain. It is a law of our nature, that a prevalent tint of green is grateful to the eye, and that the reflection of the varied objects which are set in a green landscape, should have a soothing tendency upon the mind, and for this reason, the freshness of nature charms him.

The air from the hills is pleasanter than that of the crowded town, because it is clearer, less burdened with smoke and noisome odors; it has purer oxygen, and the lungs need a large supply of oxygen to burn that amount of the starch, sugar, and fat of our food, which is necessary for keeping up the animal heat.

Our machinist sees a wild rose-bush growing by the wayside. He carefully takes it up with all its roots, thinking to carry it home and plant it in his own yard. But how does he know that because it grew in one place, it will grow in another? and what makes him suppose that if it live and bear flowers, they will be roses, and not hollyhocks? what makes every bush bear its own kind, year by year?

He plucks a flower out of the grass, a violet. It has five petals, five stamens, one pistil. Every other violet on earth has just the same number; with only such exceptions of deformity as sometimes we find in men, born cripples. So every lily on earth has just six sta-

mens and six petals. Every snow-drop has just six stamens, three petals, and one pistil. Every samphire blossom, just one stamen and one pistil. Find these in any continent or island, on any hill-slope, or prairie; each is itself, and nothing else.

Let him analyze water into its elements, and he will find hydrogen and oxygen, two to one in quantity, one to eight in weight. It is the same the world over. He may dip it from the Atlantic, or from Lake Superior, from the Amazon, or the Thames, or the Nile; he may catch it from the spray of Niagara, or as it plashes down from the angry clouds, or shake it from the grass-blade, which it kisses by night — everywhere it is just the same; "two to one, and one to eight."

Let him analyze the air he breathes. Let him bring it down by a balloon from above the clouds, or let him bring it up from the lowest cranny in the earth; let him get it from the spicy gales of Araby, or from the cold blasts of Siberia, and he will find it everywhere identical; two parts of oxygen to eight of nitrogen, in every ten.

Let him analyze the light which makes it day, and whose absence makes it night. He may take one of its rays in any quarter of the earth, and separate it into seven colors, violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red; just seven, never more, never less — always the same, always in the same order.

Let him look at light more fully. He will find that three great powers reside in every sunbeam — the power of illumination, of warmth, and of force. By its illumination, it makes the earth a place for locomotion and labor. By its heat it becomes the source of life and

growth to the vegetable world, and of comfort to man. By its silent force it originates almost all the power which there is on earth. It sets in motion the winds, it raises vapor from all oceans, and lakes, and streams, and thus irrigates the globe, and gives man that mighty energy which he calls "water-power." But the sunbeam is not merely the primal source of wind and water power alone, it is the primal source also, of all steam and animal power. In a chemical point of view, steam power and animal power are produced in precisely the same manner, by different machinery. That is: to do its day's work, the steam-engine oxidizes a certain amount of carbon and hydrogen, in the shape of coal and wood; and this process of combustion in its furnace, furnishes it with its power to work. To do his day's work, the man oxidizes a certain amount of carbon and hydrogen in the shape of food; and this process of combustion in his respiration, furnishes him with his power to work. See now how all this runs back to the sunbeam as its source. The water in the boiler, the coal and wood in the furnace of the steam-engine, all came from the sunbeam, — the water drawn up by it from the ocean and dropped down in rain to feed the rivers, and cisterns, and wells, that would else quickly be dry; the wood grown by the vivifying power of the sun's light and heat, and all the time watered with the moisture which the sun draws up and lets fall upon it; the coal, carbon which once was wood, the remains of ancient vegetation, force reservoired from the sun ages ago, and now first applied to human use.

And so the food which the man's digestion converts

into the source of his inward combustion, and its resultant force, is either vegetable — grown as the wood grows by the sunbeam's energy; or animal, itself grown upon vegetables which that sunbeam produced.

Now, as our machinist walks home in the twilight, and prepares to seek, in sleep, again, that refreshment which his weariness demands, let him ask himself how it happens that he has been thus all the day, living and moving and having his being among laws; how it happens that every thing is somehow obviously the effect of contrivance, so that whether he sleeps or eats, or walks or works, he is encompassed with results; so that he cannot see or hear any thing, or touch any thing, or do any thing that can be accounted for without the supposition of a mind behind it all, the result of whose arrangement it is?

Here are these two simple principles which he cannot help believing and acting upon in all the affairs of life; that every effect must have a cause, and that every cause implies a causing mind; and here are hundreds and thousands of facts clustering about the experiences of one single day, which his common sense tells him are effects — beautiful and wondrous evidences of the skillful energy of some wise and mighty mind.

What resource is there for him, but to say — I am surrounded on every side, at every moment, with results which must be the results of an Infinite Mind. "Every house is built by some man" — and he that built all these things, is God.

See how absurd is the position which he must take if he denies this. His implements of labor, the very dead metals on which he works, the food he eats, the air he

breathes, the light that shines upon him, every thing — in heaven, on earth, in the waters under the earth, rebukes him for reasoning differently on this question from his process in every other; for blindly dashing in the face of every fact, and forsaking all probabilities for one dismal — I had almost said — *im*-possibility.

If he had a curious machine of his own invention exhibiting in the Mechanics' Fair, which he is sure is of great public advantage, and which he hopes will make his fortune — how angry it would make him, if some bystander should turn sneeringly away from it, and say that "it was no credit to him;" that "it came by chance." He knows that he toiled wearily over it; that it took months of patient contrivance to overcome all its difficulties and adjust its cunning movement; and no wonder he is angry at the attempt to discredit his ingenuity in so absurd a way. But if his machine argues him as its inventor, whom does *he*, with his power to invent it, argue?

A logical escape from this argument in proof of the Being of a God, can be attempted only in one of the five following ways; namely,

1. By denying the facts, which every well-informed mind knows to be impossible: or,

2. By denying that every effect proves a cause, and that every cause implies a causing mind, which we all agree to be indisputable, and which no man can help taking for granted in every thing else but this argument: or,

3. By taking the ground that the universe as it is now, is a *development*, or a sort of natural growth from a simple beginning, under the guidance of its own inhe-

rent law; to which it is enough to reply that this only removes the difficulty a step further back; and compels us to ask who impressed upon matter that inherent law? For if the universe is but a great plant, unfolding by its own impulse of growth, it becomes the most impressive contrivance we can possibly imagine, and demands an Infinite Contriver to account for it; or,

4. By taking the ground that every thing has always existed just as it does now, and therefore never had a Creator; or,

5. By the assertion that the argument does not prove *one* mind, but as many minds as there are effects.

To the first, second, and third, I have already replied. To the fourth, I answer, you cannot prove that every thing has always existed just as it does now. You cannot produce a particle of evidence to that effect, while I can produce a great amount of geological testimony in proof that every thing has *not* always existed as it is now. I can prove, for example, from Geology, that there has been a time when the earth existed as a mass of molten matter, and therefore was unfit to support life, and had no life upon it, animal or vegetable; whence it follows that the life which now crowds the globe, must have had a beginning. I can prove from Geology, moreover, that at least as many as six distinct groups of organic beings have occupied the earth since it was habitable, and have left their remains upon it, and that man appears upon the earth last of them all; which is radically inconsistent with the notion that things have always existed as they are.

Moreover, I deny that if you could even prove that the universe has always existed as it is, you would then

destroy the presumption of the existence of a God. You might change our idea of him to a coexisting and sustaining God, rather than a creator, but it would be just as unreasonable then to refuse to infer a causing mind from the universe as an effect, as it is now.

And if you take the ground that, though these innumerable effects around us, prove that each had a cause, for that very reason, they prove many Gods instead of one God: — I answer, in the first place, if it were so, so much the worse for the Atheist; and, in the second place, that it is a principle of common sense never to suppose any more causes for an effect than are necessary to produce it. If the farmer finds that his fence has been pushed down in the night, and five hundred hills of corn have been trampled upon and injured, he does not infer that five hundred horses have jumped in and each trampled one hill; because he knows that one horse could have done the whole. If his desk is broken open, and five hundred silver dollars are stolen therefrom, he does not infer five hundred thieves; because it is much more reasonable to infer that one thief took the whole. The same principle leads us to infer one God instead of many, unless there are indications of such a want of harmony in different classes of effects as to make it more reasonable to suppose two Gods, than one God so contrary in his developments. But there are no such indications. Every thing harmonizes; all the forces of nature interwork so beautifully, and agree together so wonderfully, as not merely to take away any possibility of inference of two hostile creating minds, but to furnish a very strong presumption, from this source alone, that he who made all things is *One God.*

I have now hinted at the argument for the Divine Existence which the outward world affords, glancing at so inconsiderable a portion only as naturally seemed to group itself around some of the events of a single day, in the life of a single man. And though the evidence which I have cited, is but as a drop to the ocean, compared with the infinite amount with which the world is crowded, I think — so sure am I that it is reasonable, and that you are reasonable beings — it cannot fail to produce its natural result of deep conviction in your minds. I should pause here, as having done enough, if I did not feel anxious to lead your thoughts toward a most salutary and satisfying habit of looking always through the natural facts that immediately surround us, to God who is behind them ; that so his presence may come to be a common, constant consciousness with us, and grow to be the light and regulator of our lives. I ask you, then, to spend a few moments more in glancing around you, and gathering up some of the evidences which surround us in this house this evening ; and which, even as we sit here, compel us to see and recognize a God.

This is a Church edifice which holds us, itself proving officially, at least, that men think there is a God. It *holds* us, first holding up itself: every stone in its foundations, every brick in its walls, every beam in its framework, every board in its floors and their superstructure, every nail that binds its parts together, mutely testifying of various mechanical laws and material facts, each one of which is sufficient of itself to demonstrate a Creator. Annul one single law, with reference to this edifice — the law of the cohesion of particles — and it would lie, a dry and shapeless dust heap, on the ground. Annul,

instead, with reference to it, the law of gravitation, which binds it down upon its own particular "lot," and the swift gyration of the earth would hurl it instantly off into space, as the water drop spins away from the periphery of the revolving wheel. Ask who made those laws, and what keeps them *laws*, and you have but one answer — God.

We are made visible to each other amid these evening shadows which rest upon the earth, by artificial light. In a distant part of the city is situated an extensive and complicated establishment, in which a certain kind of coal is exposed, in a close vessel, to a great heat, till it gives off copiously a kind of vapor, which being passed through various cleansing processes, is lodged at last in an immense receiver, from which it is crowded out into those pipes which bring it under the streets to these burners, where its combustion furnishes the illumination by which we see to carry on our service. All this would fail, if that coal did not contain the illuminating principle; if heat would not expel it; if lime and sulphate of iron would not purify it; if it were not lighter than common air, so as to ascend out of the opened orifice; if the law of the pressure of fluids was not such that the weight pressing down at the Gasometer did not extend its action to these extremities of the connected pipes, so as to eject the gas; if it would not combine with the oxygen of the air and so, freely burn. At each of these points (and a score of others which I will not take time to mention,) you are obliged to ask a question to which there can be but one reasonable answer, and that answer — God.

We see before us a huge instrument with scores of

keys, and dozens of stops, and hundreds of pipes, which, by the touch of a skillful hand, pours forth a flood of grand and sweet harmony. We find that a science is connected with it, and must be known, to comprehend and use it. And we find that science full of laws. We find sounds grouped in clusters of sevens, so that, begin where you will, and go up or down seven steps, and you are conscious that you have come to the same sound again, but on a higher or lower level of tone. Moreover, you find — start with any note, where you will — that another note at the interval of a tone or semitone, or two tones and semitones (that is, a major or minor second, or a flat fifth,) will grate intolerably upon the ear; while a third, or a perfect fifth, makes sweet accord, and five tones and two semitones give you the first note again. More than one hundred years ago, a man sat down in St. Martin's Street, Leicester Square, London, at the harpsicord, and running his hands over the keys, composed a strong and jubilant melody. When he had risen from the instrument, he recorded that melody in certain characters which were afterwards printed, and reprinted here. And when we sang God's praise in our opening song, we reproduced, note by note, the harmony of that harpsichord, and, no doubt, our minds, in doing so, felt some emotions kindred to those which Dr. Burney felt, when he first conceived those strains which have sounded from so many tongues. But how comes it that emotion and musical sound can be imprisoned in lines and dots, and so reproduced in any place at any time. How comes it that this organ here and that of St. Paul's Cathedral at London, might both play "Old Hundred," at the same moment, with the same identical

sounds and same speed of movement, so that one volume of tone should be the facsimile of the other, though 3,000 miles apart? Nay, how comes it that air crowded through a square wooden pipe, will always produce one quality of sound, and, through a round metal pipe, another? How comes it that the flute stop should be smooth and sweet, the hautboy, shrill and sharp, the trumpet, spirited and loud? How comes it that we are capable of receiving pleasure, and of being sensibly aided in our devotion, by musical sounds? We may ask a thousand questions such as these, but the answer is ever one and the same!

Look, a moment, at yourselves, as you sit here. Five fingers on each hand, five toes on each foot, five senses; *five*, *five times repeated*, in each one of you. Either you were, each one of you, made by a mind that can count five, or you were not. If you were, all is clear. If you were not, spend a moment in calculating, with arithmetical accuracy, the chances that one single one of you would miss one of these five fives. Figures will give the chances against both of your hands having five fingers, as 25 to 1. Add the feet, and the chances are 625 to 1, against your having the full number of fingers and toes. Add the senses, and the chances are 3,125 to 1, that you will miss somewhere of the complete number. Now calculate these chances for two of you, and they swell to 9,765,625 to 1, against your both having the full complement. Calculate the chances for all this assembly, and a lifetime would not be long enough to cipher out the improbability that each one of you would get your five fives. Calculate those chances for the race living and dead, and it

springs at once beyond the finiteness of mortal powers to tell how improbable it is that men with their five fingers, and five toes, and five senses, are not the workmanship of a God who can count five. If an archangel were to make the calculation for us, we could not even understand his exposition of it — it would be so vast.

I have stood here, speaking, now, a long time. You have listened. If a Hindoo, knowing only his native jargon, had been present, he would only have had the knowledge that I *was* speaking, and you hearing. But while I have looked at you and uttered words, and you have looked at me and heard them, our minds have travelled over immense distances, under the leading, on your part, of the uttered sounds on mine, of the requisitions of my argument. Together we have roamed over the universe, glancing at clouds, and waters, and minerals and flowers; peering into processes, searching after laws, and questioning on what this glorious fabric stands. I have thought of God, and you have thought of God — my thought suggesting yours — through the utterance which it found at my lips, and the entrance to your ear and mind, which that utterance gained.

Now how is all this? How can we explain these facts — that the air which my lungs have expelled through my throat, manufactured there into sound, by the action of my will upon the vocal machinery, and so stirring vibrations in all the atmosphere of this house, should affect the auditory machinery of each one of you, so that you have become conscious of the sounds which I have made. And — infinitely vaster question — how is it to be explained that these sounds have taken up my ideas and carried them over to you, so that you have

thought what I thought; — no mistake ever being made, but each sound clinging to, and bodying forth always its own proper idea? And — most vast question of all — how is it that these sounds and ideas awaken conviction and emotion, so that your hearts throb with mine?

Answer this who can! None of us *can* answer it in detail, for the mystery of it is too magnificent. We can only hover around the outer circle of obvious facts which surround it, and stand in awe of the solemn voice which issues out of their depths, declaring "it is He that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night, that calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out upon the face of the earth — *the Lord is his name.*"

Does not this all furnish us an *efficient certainty* of a God? Nay, have we not, actually, each just as much evidence that there is a God here, as that there are men here? I am persuaded that you are here, because I see you here. My senses *may* deceive me; that is possible; but it is not reasonable for me to believe that they do. So our senses may deceive us as to these evidences that God is here; but we do not believe that they do. It would be absurd to imagine deceit in either case, and it is just as absurd to doubt that God is here, as to doubt that *we* are here. If I shut my eyes and hear the organ play, I do not act on the ordinary principles of common sense, if I do not infer that somebody is blowing its bellows, and somebody sitting at its keys, though I see them not. And, just so, I am false to right reason, if, from all the tokens of creative and sustaining energy which cluster, at this moment, around

us, I do not conclude that God is here, though I see him not; if, from the innumerable proofs of design which encompass our path and our lying down, and beset us behind and before in our daily experiences, I do not infer an Infinite and glorious Presence, invisibly brooding our life.

Yes — nature, with her ten thousand voices, speaks, evermore, one language; in her majesty and in her lowliness, ever and everywhere uttering, with the same reverence, the Eternal name. Her testimonies are just as truthful here within these four walls; in our houses, and workshops; as out among the everlasting hills. And though, when she speaks in her grandeur, she may awe and delight us most; when she speaks in her common, every-day practicalness, she may work her most thorough conviction in our hearts. Let us listen to her, then, everywhere.

As we gaze out upon her sky-piercing mountains, — basking their hoary heads in the sunlight that is above the clouds, robed in the glittering garment of the icy glacier, and bathing their feet in their own roaring torrents, we ask, with Coleridge: —

"Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven,
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet? —
God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice plains echo, God!
God! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest!
Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain storm!
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the element!
Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise!"

But let us not feel that we must go to the Alps to find Jehovah; the humblest rock, the most familiar plant, the noisest mill, the lowliest home, of New England can suggest him just as forcibly as the vale of Chamouni. And if we will only hearken to the still small voice of common things, we shall find them whispering tenderly that majestic name.

"Thou Lord! who rearest the mountain's hight,
And mak'st the cliffs with sunshine bright;
Oh grant that we may own Thy hand
No less in every grain of sand.

"In all the immense, the strange, the old,
Thy presence careless men behold;
Yet in the little, weak, and mean,
By faith Thou art as clearly seen.

"Teach Thou that not one leaf can grow,
Till life from Thee, within it flow;
That not a speck of dust can be,
O Fount of Being, save by Thee.

"Inspire us, Thou, in every glance
Of all our dreams confused as chance,
In every change of mortal things,
To see a power from Thee that springs;

"In every human word and deed,
Each flash of feeling, will, or creed,
To know a plan ordained above,
Begun and ending all in love.

"So, smallest bubbles here on earth
With us shall claim an heavenly birth,
And each faint atom floating by,
Flash in the luster of Thine eye."

Wherefore, let us stand in awe and sin not, since God compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways.

Being certified at every moment, by what we see in and around ourselves, both of his constant nearness and his unfailing munificence, let us receive with meekness his revealed word, as our guide unto salvation; let his tender mercies lead us to return his love; and let us never more look forth upon the magnificence of this outward world, without considering what manner of persons we — for whom it was made — ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; being diligent, that when this transitory life shall be past, we, through his grace in our Redeemer, may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless!

II.

THE WHOLE BIBLE, OR NONE.*

MARK VII: 13.

MAKING THE WORD OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT THROUGH YOUR TRADITION, WHICH YE HAVE DELIVERED.

THESE words were uttered during the last year before the crucifixion, in a discussion at Capernaum, between Christ and certain Scribes and Pharisees who had dogged his footsteps from Jerusalem, apparently as spies of the rulers of the Jews. They found fault because they saw some of his disciples eat bread without first washing the hands,—an offence against a "tradition" which "the elders" had taken the responsibility of adding to the law and the testimony. Jesus replied by denouncing the addition as unauthorized of God, and rebuking them for daring to tamper with the integrity of Divine Revelation; showing, by illustration, how the Jews had damaged the power of the Old Testament, by "laying aside the commandment of God," in favor of "the commandments of men," to that extent that it was declared of them: "in vain do they worship me."

* Williams Hall, November 27th, 1859.

He proceeded to characterize the effect of their action upon the Law of God by the use of a Greek word, taking its significance from an adjective which had long before been applied by Plato and Thucydides to human laws, in the sense of robbing them of their force, and making them invalid and null. So that his real meaning would perhaps best express itself, in our common speech, thus: You have made the Bible useless by claiming the power to add to it, or take from it, at your discretion.

If this principle here enumerated be correct, its application is broad enough to cover the New Testament as well as the Old, and the conduct of the world, as well as that of the Elders of the Jews; and it carries us inevitably to the proposition: *the whole Bible — just as it is — or no Bible.* If the Jews could not add to, or take from, the "Law and the Prophets," without making them of none effect through their tradition; no more can we tamper with the New Testament, without emptying it of its divine and supernatural force as a guide of life; so that we must take the Scriptures just as they are, as given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, or we have no divine revelation. Any thing less, or else, is other and null. The Bible is one rounded, completed, compacted unit, which, through its sixty-six books, like the Fresnel lens through its multifarious pieces of glass ground each to its own relative place, transmits the light of Heaven, pure, clear, safe, — able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus; or it is an imposture and an absurdity.

Mr. Parker, indeed, — much the most plausible man

who has, in our day, attacked the Inspiration of the Bible — has urged another possibility. He says (*Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion*, p. 345), "unless we reject this [the Bible] entirely, one of two things must be done; either we must pretend to believe the whole, absurdities and all; or else we must accept what is true, good, and Divine therein; take each part for what it is worth; gather the good together, and leave the bad to itself." And then he proceeds to argue that the true method is "to divide the Word rightly; separate mythology from history, fact from fiction, what is religious and of God, from what is earthly and not of God; — to take the Bible for what it is worth." He further claims that if we keep insisting on the belief of the *whole* Bible, we shall "drive bad men to hypocrisy, good men to madness, and thinking men to 'infidelity;' throw obstacles in the way of religion and morality, and tie the millstone of the Old and New Testaments about the neck of piety." His plan therefore is, to add to the two old possibilities — of accepting or rejecting the Bible as an inspired whole sent from God, — this, of accepting a part of it as good and important, and rejecting the rest as false and harmful; — he to decide, by criticism of his own, what and how much to accept and reject, for himself; others, of course, to make the same decision for themselves.

Now the simple question is whether there *is* any such middle ground as this; whether it is the safe thing, and the right thing, and the thing which God intended to have us do, — or, indeed, a thing in any wise logically possible, — neither to accept the Bible, nor to reject it; but to half accept and half reject it; each man of us

proportioning his semi-acceptance and semi-rejection to his own notions of what he needs, and of its adaptation to that need? I believe, and shall seek to prove, that such a compromise measure as this is utterly unreasonable, and impossible; and that, if we propose to carry our common sense into our religion, and be governed by it, — we must accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as a complete, self-consistent, and indivisible unity; or reject them as such. It comes to this, just, and only this; nothing more, nothing less, nothing else; — the whole Bible, or none!

The first consideration which I urge is: —

I. *There is no need of the introduction of this intermediate hypothesis, because all those objections to the inspiration of any part of the Bible which have led to it, can be disposed of without it.*

I think five classes will include all those objections which Mr. Parker thinks fatal to the genuineness of those portions of Scripture which contain them.

1. He alleges that many passages of the Bible are records of imperfection and of sin. That indeed is so; for much of the Bible is the history of the race, and the history of *such* a race, can be none other than a record of imperfection and of sin. But the record is for warning and not for allurement. Nobody was ever tempted by it. And it is a total misconception of the whole character of the Bible, to suppose that the presence in it of human history, teaching by example, can destroy the claim of any part of it to be designed of God for the benefit of man.

2. It is alleged that the Bible gives anthropomorphic views of God; and in representing him to repent, to be

angry, etc., it contradicts the demonstrable facts of his immutability, and of his infinite kindness; and that all such passages ought to be expunged, as untrue in fact, and unworthy in intent. But to this, the ready and reasonable answer is, that these representations of God were condescensions on the part of exact spiritual truth to the mental weakness and childlikeness of the Jewish mind. If God proposed to teach spiritual truth at all to the Hebrews, in their low estate, as they came out of Egypt; he must stoop toward their level, he must talk to them in simple graphic language, as we talk to our children, and such stooping, instead of impairing, immeasurably hightens the honest value of the Sacred record.

3. So we are told that the Bible contains contradictions of some facts of science, of some assertions of collateral history, and indeed of some assertions of its own; and that all such passages ought to be cast out as having no place in a book of God — which should be one of purely self-consistent truth. But these imagined contradictions all vanish when we remember that the Bible was written to men, for the good of men, and in the speech of men; and not to be a manual of science, but a guide of life. Hence it is no more true that it is a contradiction of the facts of the solar system, that the Bible should describe the sun as rising and setting, while it is the earth, and not the sun, which really moves; than it is that common human speech should do so. And if there is any instance where the Bible does not seem to square altogether with human history, we think it quite as likely to be authentic as the history is; while its own alleged contradictions are never any thing more than

the varying reports of different parties of what they saw on different sides of the same scene — like the knights who disagreed about the shield, because one saw only the silver, and the other only the golden side.

4. Mr. Parker says that the claim which is made for the inspiration of the apostles, cannot be granted, for they were not ready for all emergencies, they made mistakes, they sinned, they were obviously not infallible: and then he refers to the facts — that Peter needed a special revelation to settle the question whether the Gentiles were to come into the kingdom with the Jews; that Paul and Barnabas quarreled; that Paul withstood Peter to the face; and that it was necessary to have a grand consultation to decide whether the Gentiles must needs keep the Law of Moses. Therefore, he argues, those men could not be infallible; and, if not infallible, then not inspired; and, if not inspired, then their writings may be sorted and sifted at pleasure; — what seems good being freely taken — what seems doubtful, as freely thrown away. But nobody, that I know of, contends that the men whom God moved to write the books of the Bible were perfect men, or that, because God superintended their composition of what was contributed by them to the Sacred Canon, they were therefore lifted at all times, and on all subjects, into the atmosphere of the divine omniscience. We grant that they *were* men, imperfect men; often sinning, and mistaking truths of thought, and ways of action. All we claim for them is, that, when they acted as God's amanuenses, they wrote what they were moved to write by the Holy Ghost. And our theory, which saves the trustworthiness of their record, by making them infalli-

ble at the special time, and for the special purpose of its composition, and leaving them fallible at other times, accounts for all the facts in the case just as well as does that of Mr. Parker, or that at the other extreme — if any one could be found to father it — which he opposes.

5. So, once again, it is affirmed that there are portions of the Scriptures which favor positive immorality, and which therefore ought to be expunged. Mr. Parker claims that the imprecations of David inculcate the spirit of revenge; that some of the Proverbs of Solomon are selfish; some of the language of Ecclesiastes skeptical, and that Christ himself taught error in regard to the eternal punishment of the wicked.

In reply, we justify those imprecations as the natural language of an honest and healthy soul, when strongly excited in view of infamous meanness and cruelty. And as to the Proverbs of Solomon and the doubts of the Preacher, we judge, as of many of the biographies of the Old Testament, that when read in sympathy with their design, and estimated by that standard which is just for them, their teaching is truthful and salutary; while we hold the doctrine of our Saviour with reference to future punishment, to be perfectly consistent with the whole tenor of the Bible on that subject, and therefore claim for it the highest possible evidence of truth.

And so I insist that there is not one of these reasons which will justify any man in rejecting any book, chapter, or verse, of the Sacred record; because all these objections which — if undisposed of — might warrant such rejection of it, can be reasonably solved without it; and if they can be solved without it, they ought to be, for such rejection would at once — as we shall see by and by — prove fatal to any inspiration, and any Bible at all.

II. *I now proceed, in the second place, to argue that we must accept the whole Bible or none of it, because all the evidence which we have to establish any of it as from God, establishes all of it, as from Him.*

We assume that our Creator — our Father which is in Heaven — he who made speech in us, and gave us minds which can receive and be conscious of communications from without, and be reasonably certified of their genuineness; can speak to us, and can so speak to us as to meet all those conditions of authenticity which his own precaution has stationed to guard the gates of the soul against the invasion of folly and error. He who himself gave us the countersign — cannot he pass the sentinel?

What, then — the question simply becomes — what, then, is reasonable evidence that any given book is actually a revelation from God?

Is it when itself assumes to be thus inspired? Then were the books of Mohammed, of Ann Lee, of Joseph Smith, inspired. Is it when its teachings are marvelously useful to the world? Then were the works of Bacon, and of Bunyan, inspired.

Plainly this question of Inspiration must be a question of simple *facts*, — whether Moses in the wilderness and John on Patmos, with their intervening collaborators, at different times and places, in writing those Greek and Hebrew manuscripts which have been Englished into our Bible, were or were not, in the tracing of those characters, under special divine influence, and so — in a sense — the amanuenses of God; writing just that, all that, and only that which he desired? It is plain that only two parties could have been cognizant

of this fact — if it were a fact — and could personally testify concerning it; possible even only one, (for God *might* not have revealed to these men the use he made of them,) and we feel obliged to throw out the testimony of the men themselves, if they gave any, because we cannot prove that they do not speak falsely; and if we once lay it down as a principle that men's own assertions are competent to establish their inspiration, and that of their books, we shall have quite too many apostles, and too many Bibles. We are driven, then, to the conclusion that we can only know, for a reasonable certainty, that any particular man is inspired of God, when God himself certifies us that he is. This he must do, of course, in some manner consonant with those laws of mind which he has established, and to which, if he would stir our convictions, he himself must be presumed to conform, in his communications with the world. This he may do by appealing to one single feeling which he created in us; doubtless for this very use. It is just a modification, or expansion of the common instinct of cause and effect, suggesting that *certain* effects irresistibly demonstrate the cotemporary presence of *divine* power. Thus, if one of this audience were to sink prostrate to the floor, and lie breathless for a few moments, and then rise up again, you would say: she has fainted, and then revived; — your sense of cause and effect would be satisfied; you would never dream of special divine power in raising her up, but only of that ordinary divine power, which we so much forget; which strings all our muscles, and inflates all our lungs, and moves on with resistless energy all the tides and forces of our life.

But suppose we were to see, painfully hobbling up

this central aisle some poor unfortunate, whose abbreviated and malformed limbs have excited our daily pity for years, as we have passed him on Washington Street; our walking pace taking us by his halting progress as a clipper in a stiff breeze shoots by a raft. And suppose that here, before our very eyes, some good man should lay his hands upon him, and tell him to stand up and be whole; and, on that word, he should stand up erect and strong, and the physicians should go to him and feel that the short thigh bones that were so crooked, are now, in an instant, long and straight, and the muscles that were lumped and knotted, are now slender and pliable, and the joints that were stiff and ossified, are now flexile and natural, and the whole frame that was cramped, and unsightly, and feeble, is now upright, and comely, and athletic — all in an instant, all at a spoken word, and yet all genuine beyond possibility of mistake. *Then* this law within us would say, at once: this effect suggests, and will have for itself, a cause beyond the sphere of all that is merely natural and ordinary. God alone could do that. God *did* that — by extraordinary manifestation of his divine power, through the channel of that good man's voice.

Suppose another case. Let there come in four men bending under a weight covered by that black pall which always heralds our funeral rites. Let them set down the bier — here where all may see it. Let them turn down the dark robe from over the face, and open the coffin lid. And let there be obvious there to every shrinking sense, features bloated, discolored, corrupting — too long withheld from the sheltering embrace of the grave. Let the physicians satisfy themselves that

there is no more life there than there is within the ribs of the skeletons that rattle under their touch of science, in their cabinets at home. Then let this same good man stand over that loathsome wreck of what was once life and strength and manly beauty, and echo those words of old: "I say unto thee, arise!" And let the dead erect himself out of his defiled investments, and come forth from that corruption, and walk before us here, all offence vanished away, with ruddy cheek and beaming eye, and voice of exultant thankfulness, and *then*, this inward sense of ours would say: here is the reasonable sign and demonstration of a presence that is divine. No merely human power *could* perform such a work as that, and this man who has done it, since he cannot be God himself, must be surcharged, for the time being, with enough of God's own power to authenticate him to us, as, beyond question, an ambassador from Him. And since — if we suppose ourselves to have no Bible, we infinitely need spiritual guidance, — it should not surprise us for God thus to send a messenger to reveal to us that truth, on the knowledge of which our very eternal life depends. And since we cannot believe that our Heavenly Father, who pitieth his children, would thus commission a bad man to mislead us, we reasonably infer that he has sent a good man to instruct us, and then we reasonably receive that good man's spoken or written message, as being truth from God.

If I am not wholly wrong in my conception of the matter, this is the only way in which it can ever be strictly reasonable for man to believe in a revelation from God; namely: when it comes thus authenticated

by miracle in the person of its writer, or in the person of somebody who vouches for the inspiration of its writer. For if I believe that Jesus, and Paul, and John, wrought miracles, and so established the inspiration of what they taught and wrote, I must receive their endorsement of other's writings, as being as really divine truth as any other proposition from their lips, or pen.

Thus I receive the entire Old Testament on the authority of Christ, who daily used and reverently quoted it. It is susceptible of the rigidest historical demonstration that the Old Testament in the hands of Christ and the Apostles, was the same — page by page, and even line by line — as that which is in our hands; while Christ endorsed it *as a whole*. So that if we have evidence that any of it is inspired, we have that same evidence that all of it is.

And, when we pass to examine the proof that Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and Jude — the eight writers of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament — gave this miraculous token that they were inspired of God; and so establish the Inspiration of those books, and thus and therefore of the whole New Testament; we find that the only question that can be legitimately raised, is one that covers a whole man, and therefore all of the one or several books which came from his pen. I believe, if you would give me time (which, of course, I cannot take here), I would submit to you as sufficient, if not as voluminous evidence, that those eight men wrought miracles, — works aside from, and above, and even wholly out of, the ordinary course of nature, — as that Cicero wrote the orations attributed to him, or that Cæsar was stabbed in

the Senate house on the Ides of March, or that Socrates drank hemlock at Athens, by the decree of the judges.

But one thing at least is clear; if I should succeed, I should succeed in establishing the inspiration of the books of the New Testament each *as a whole*, and if I should fail in the case of either of the eight men, I should fail *as a whole* to justify the place of what he wrote, in the Bible. If then they were inspired at all, their inspiration covers every line and letter of their books. If they were not inspired, then *no* line nor letter of their books is inspired; so that it is impossible to take their work apart, and say: this verse of John's, this chapter of Peter's, this argument of Paul's, is not inspired, and must be dissected from its connection, and thrown away as worthless, while you receive the rest. It is, it must be, "the whole or none!"

III. *But let us pass to the consideration that, from the very nature of the case, such a semi-revelation as is supposed by those who would accept a part of the Bible, and reject the rest, according to their own judgment, would be just no revelation at all.*

The specific idea of a "revelation" is of a disclosing to the mind, from an external source, of something which was wholly unknown to it before. And when we come to the question of what God's revelation to men must presumably be, we need to add to this the idea, that it is a disclosure to man, not only of something which, as a matter of fact, was before unknown to him, but something which he *could* not know without it; for it would not be like God to bow the very heavens, and come down before men's eyes by miracle, to teach them that which is within their reach, — from their own mental suggestion, or from any other source.

But if this be the true idea of revelation as it attaches to the Bible, and if God has given us, by a series of miracles, this series of books, it is because the truths taught in them *would* never, and *could* never have come into our possession through any other process.

Those books may indeed bring those truths to us portrayed in a very unmiraculous aspect, — some being reflected from the story of good men's lives, and some from the record of bad men's fate; some interwoven with proverbs, and some interwreathed with psalm and song; some draped in the cloudy mantle of prophecy, and some beautified in the light vestments of parable — but, however they may be garmented and garlanded for their impression upon our mind, they have come from God to us; the lessons which they speak, never so simply, *he* taught them; and neither they, nor we, would know them but for Him, and for this sending of His wisdom, through them, to earth, and to us.

Now I say that it is not only an impertinence, but an absolute nullification and denial of any inspiration at all to them, if we take these books — which descend thus, as out of heaven to us, freighted with knowledge which comes thus because it is above, and not only above, but out of the reach, and not only out of the reach, but out of the original conception of our minds — and proceed to criticise them, and lay out this chapter, and reject that verse, and question the other paragraph because — because we do not altogether like them! If they are inspired, it will not invalidate their inspiration, that we like them not; and being medicine for our spiritual sickness, and medicine being apt to be bitter, and so not palatable, perhaps it is rather to be expected

than otherwise, that we shall not like them — in the sense of finding them palatable to our diseased moral taste. If we reject them on this ground, we leap, at once, into the judgment seat over them, or rather, we degrade them so low that from the lowliness where we stand, we can look down upon and condemn them. In so doing, we rob them of any possible claim to Inspiration. If they are inspired, then they are discussions of truth above the range of our judgment; the fact that they are inspired, lifts them there; and we have no more right to criticise them, than the lad at his multiplication table has to assume to throw out here an equation, and there a formula, and elsewhere a problem, from the cipherings of Newton among the stars, or Bowditch among the waves. If we criticise them, we assume to have the knowledge to do so; and to have that knowledge we must be above them; and for us to be above them, they must be below us; and so we take them down from the loftiness of God's thoughts — which are not ours — and degrade them to the human level of mere good advice, to be taken or rejected at our pleasure.

The relation of Reason to Revelation is this. Reason must decide concerning any man or any book, whether he, or it, brings — properly authenticated — a special message from God. When she has become satisfied that this is the case, she meekly bends her ear to receive that message, without assuming the power to judge *it*, in detail. It would not have been communicated thus supernaturally, unless it had been beyond her natural reach; and if it is beyond her natural reach, it is beyond her power of criticism. She may have many just

ideas concerning it, but it necessarily deals so much with matters out of her sphere, that it will not be safe for her to sit in judgment upon it. Having accepted it, in the mass, as authenticated from God, she has accepted it *all* as imperative over herself. And for her to treat it as mere advice, which she may criticise in its details, and follow, or not, as she pleases, would be to degrade it at once from any dignity of inspiration, and empty it of all *authority* — the vitalest element of a Revelation from God.

It is amazing with what sophistry — ludicrous if it were not so sad in its results — men, claiming common sense, befool themselves upon this subject; in their haste to put out the shining torch which God's hand is holding down to light us out of "the horrible pit and the miry clay," violating those first principles of reasoning, obedience to which, on all other subjects, they make the very test of sanity. Let me illustrate their folly.

Here is a great ship coming up the bay, under full sail, for our harbor. Her swelling pyramids of snowy canvas, which the salt breath of the sea fills as it crowds her along her course, tower above a hull deep laden with the treasures of the Orient. A foreign flag floats at her main. Her keel never ploughed these waters before. Her captain, her officers, her crew, look for the first time upon these western waves. As she makes the outer Light, a pilot boat hails her, and puts on board one of those shrewd and hardy sailors who know their way in the dark among all our reefs and shoals; and the ship is put under his charge.

I think we may say with propriety, that this man is a *revelation* to that ship, of the crooked things between

Point Alderton and Long Wharf, which must be made straight, before she can reach her moorings.

Now suppose the Captain to receive this revelation "as a whole," yet to take with it the course which Mr. Parker proposes to apply to the Bible; namely: accept what seems to him "true, good, and divine therein; take each part for what it is worth; gather the good together, and leave the bad to itself."

As she glides along the edge of the shoal that fringes the Great Brewster, heading straight for George's Island, he says to the brown and brawny man who is guiding the sailors at the wheel: —

"Pilot! I expect you know the way 'in general,' up this harbor, but, unless I am greatly deceived, you are going to run us on that fort just ahead. It doesn't look reasonable to me to steer in that way, and I should myself advise putting her head about five points more to the South'ard."

The pilot touches his tarpaulin as he asks, in reply: —

"Ever here afore, Cap'p'n?"

"Never."

"Well, I guess you don't want to go into the Nantasket Roads to find the ship channel — I never saw it anywhere else except a leetle to the Nor'r'ad of that same fort!"

The Captain subsides for the time being; only however, ever and anon, to return to the charge. He distrusts the propinquity of Lovel's Island; wants to run the wrong side of Nix's Mate; thinks the deep water ought to be more over toward Point Shirley; and when — farther up — he sees the ship's bowsprit persistently

pointed toward one of the port-holes of the battery on Castle Island, he bursts forth again: —

"Come, come Pilot, I can't stand such steering as this; bear away more for the city; I don't want to survey the islands, but to bring up to the wharves. I have no doubt you have 'a general idea' of this harbor, but it doesn't stand to reason to run down another fort!"

The pilot retires in disgust from the quarter-deck, wishing he could moor the ship near enough to Somerville to discharge the Captain into the Insane Asylum, before leaving, himself; and the latter "takes the responsibility." Round whirls the wheel, and round goes the ship's head toward the smooth but shallow expanse that stretches Northward, and seems to promise a straighter course toward the city. Her sails are now distended with a fairer breeze, and she rushes on like the leading race-horse nearing the goal, until she brings up, with a dull staggering, in the soft sand of the Middle Ground; where the tide soon leaves her high and dry!

Who does not see the outrageous folly of a perfect stranger's setting up thus to criticise the revelation of the course of a ship in from the outer Light, of an old sailor who has been up and down more times than he has hairs on his head and beard both! But wherein is that man less wickedly foolish, who sets himself up to criticise the revelation of the omniscient God to man; — saying "I think this must be wrong; I am clear that ought to be different; I must take each part for what it is worth!"

You are smitten down with sudden sickness. You fear it is unto death! You writhe in agonizing pain;

your whole inward nature seems to be in dreadful disorder. You have no skill to divine the cause; you do not know which way the channels of life run, where the obstruction is, how it can most hopefully be reached, or by what process removed. You do not therefore know what to do to relieve yourself.

You send, with utmost haste, for a physician, whose skill you can trust; whom you believe to know, as well as any man can, those hidden channels of life, and how to purge away the obstructions of disease. He comes. He examines your condition. From the beat of your pulse, the feel of your skin, the look of your tongue; from your confused account of the seat and style of your sensations; from all which he can see and infer — he makes up his mind what the matter is, and what treatment will be likeliest to afford relief. Thoughtfully he devises his remedies, and combining this pill with that powder and the other lotion, he hopes to check and reverse the progress of the malady, and start you on the road toward health again. He is a *revelation* to you of that inward disturbance, and of what must be done for its repair.

Will you now be a sane man — nay, can you reasonably expect to be long a *live* one — if you receive that revelation "as a whole," yet assume to criticise its parts; following the prescription in some particulars, yet rejecting it in others; swallowing this pill, but throwing away that powder and the other lotion, because you do not like their aspect, or their odor, or because you distrust the cabalistic formula by which the apothecary compounded them? It is an old maxim, that a lawyer who pleads his own cause, has a fool for

a client, and that a doctor should never become his own patient — so great is our likelihood of error in our judgments concerning ourselves; and therefore so great the danger of killing, where we have the very best intent to cure. I attended — but this very last week — the funeral of a man of medical science, who was said to have come to his end by mistaking his disease, and prescribing the wrong thing to himself. But if men of science endanger their lives by presuming to become a law unto themselves, how wickedly absurd it must be for you who make no pretence to any of their knowledge, thus to take your life into your own hands! And how clearly the revelation of your physician becomes no revelation at all, in that moment when you nullify it, by throwing away perhaps its vitalest part, because it does not seem reasonable to your ignorance. If you have no confidence in the physician, do not employ him. If you *have* confidence, have *all* confidence in him, and give him a fair chance to save your life, by allowing his skill to do its perfect work. And so if you see ground for reasonable confidence in the Great Physician of souls, take his revelation in its integrity, as he gives it to you — and do not make it of none effect through your tradition.

Do you urge; I am willing to receive as authoritative, what seems to me authentic, and I claim, therefore, to do no violence to the divine authority of revelation, by throwing out what appears to me unreasonable in it? I answer, either God intended that we should take *all* the Bible as an authoritative revelation to guide our life, or he did not. If he did so intend, we ought so to receive it. If, on the contrary, he wished us to receive, as of divine authority, only certain por-

tions of the Bible, he would have given us a supplementary revelation, designating *what* portions he desires us so to receive. In the absence of such a supplementary revelation, it is just the same as if we had no revelation at all; for we can make no use of the Bible unless we can take its chapters and verses and model our life by them, and we can never tell concerning any particular chapter or verse, whether *it* is inspired, and so are left without *any* guide.

You wish to commence some chemical business which you think can be turned to profit. You purchase, at great cost, a manual, giving minutely those processes for the laboratory, in the exact following of which you expect to reach your desired result. After you have made all your preparations, and just as you are about to commence your manufacture, you become informed that only a *part* of that manual is authentic; that, scattered through it, are a great many blunders, not merely, but false receipts which would lead you to a total waste of time and material. You indignantly write to its author to know what he means by publishing such a book, and asking him to furnish you with an exact list of all the false and defective portions, in order that you may waste neither time nor money over them. He replies by telling you to use your own discretion! Now, you may have any amount of discretion concerning that which comes within the scope of your information, but you feel that it is impossible for sheer ignorance to exercise discretion, and so you throw away the book as no revelation at all; because you cannot get a supplementary revelation, to discriminate authoritatively between the truth and falsehood of the first.

Just so we are situated in regard to the Bible, if it has uninspired portions, and we are left without a supplementary revelation to tell us where they are. So that if it is only a semi-revelation, it is no revelation at all — and therefore it is a mockery, nay, a cruelty, impossible to come from the infinitely loving God.

Here, then, right Reason takes her stand. This is her voice: *the whole Bible or no Bible!* She can discover no need of rejecting any chapter, verse, or line, on account of their contents, because any thing at first inexplicable in them can be better explained in another manner; she is driven to conclude that all that vast mass of evidence which goes to establish the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures in general, must equally establish the force of their every part; while every principle of common sense forces her toward the conviction that any theory of semi-revelation applied to the Bible, must be fatal to all its claims to be a revelation at all. So that, from whatever side she approaches the subject, and in whatever aspect she regards it, she reaches the conclusion of both David and Solomon: "Thy testimonies are very sure," "Every word of God is pure;" and makes up at last her verdict in the very language which the beloved disciple recorded, to stand everlasting sentinel on the last page of the holy book: — "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

III.

REPENTANCE ALONE INSUFFICIENT.*

ACTS VIII: 22.

REPENT, THEREFORE, OF THIS THY WICKEDNESS, AND PRAY GOD, IF PERHAPS THE THOUGHT OF THINE HEART MAY BE FORGIVEN THEE.

One of the greatest obstacles which is encountered in the endeavor to persuade men to obey the precepts of evangelic truth, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation, is found in the wide-spread feeling that simple regret for sin will secure its forgiveness. It is undoubtedly true, as a general rule, that when a child has done wrong, and becomes sincerely sorry for that wrong, he is, and ought to be, forgiven by his parent. And, laying hold of this conceded principle, men argue, since God is our Heavenly Father, and has a heart infinitely kind, that the same rule will hold between Him and us, and that, if any man is really sorry for his sins, God will, for that sorrow merely, forgive him. So that when you draw near to such men, and urge them to repent and believe in Christ, and do works meet for repentance, and tell them that they are in

* Pine Street Church, November 23d, 1856.

danger of eternal condemnation if they do not do this; they reply: does not the earthly Father forgive his child when he is sorry for his sin; and is not God infinitely more inclined to give good gifts to us, than earthly parents are to give them to their children? They will very likely say that they *are* sorry that they have done wrong; that they have always regretted their errors; that they have ever sought to make restitution if they have injured anybody; that, if you can convince them now that they have done such an injury, which is unrepaired, they will go, at once, and make it their first business to rectify the evil. Thus they feel as if they had squared their accounts as they have gone along — year by year, and day by day — and, remembering that Jehovah himself has said that he is "very pitiful and of tender mercy" they entertain no fears for the future. They do not feel the force of your arguments — do not yield themselves to your appeals.

I have no doubt many such men are honest in their convictions, and really believe that there is no need of their doing any thing more than they have done, to secure the divine favor. I have no doubt that there are individuals here this morning, who, with entire sincerity hold that their mere repentance — without any thing more — will be accepted by God, and will secure the pardon of sin.

I desire to treat all such honest belief with entire respect; to hold fair discussion with it; to concede to it every possible argument to which it has a right, and to invite and urge it to desert its ground, and come over to the position which I hold, only when it shall have become reasonably convinced that its creed is

fundamentally erroneous, and that the truth is on my side.

You believe that simple sorrow for sin will secure its pardon from the merciful and paternal God.

I believe that sincere sorrow for sin is just as necessary as you do; but that it is not, of itself, sufficient to secure pardon, and that, in addition to this, one must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation."

Let us reason together.

I. *I urge that the argument of analogy on which you ground your faith that sincere sorrow for sin is, of itself, sufficient, is imperfect.*

The analogy is that of a parent and his child, and the argument, if reduced to its particulars, would be this: —

1. Earthly parents forgive their children when they have sufficient evidence that they are sorry for their sin.

2. God is a parent.

3. Therefore God will forgive his children when he sees that they are sincerely sorry for their sin.

But here is a palpable flaw in the reasoning. In order to make the argument good, you ought to be able to make it read thus: —

1. Earthly parents forgive their children on simple repentance.

2. God *is an earthly parent;* that is: will act on precisely the same principles as earthly parents do.

3. Therefore God will forgive his children on simple repentance. You must be able, in other words, to show that the relation of God to his creatures, is so far identical with that of the earthly parent to his child, that what holds good of one, will necessarily hold good

of the other. To say this, is impossible. You do not know it. You cannot prove it from natural religion. And if you go to the Bible for proof, you must take *all* which it says, as true; and that will overturn it.

But if you could say it — if you had reasonable and sufficient evidence that the relation between God and his creatures is so exactly identical with that subsisting between us and our children, as to make it safe to reason from one to the other — I think it may be shown that this very principle would turn itself against you with unanswerable force. The argument would be this: —

1. Granted that the relation between God and his creatures is so far analogous to that between earthly parents and their children, that the same principles which govern the pardon of offences in the one case, will apply to the other.

2. But, in certain cases, earthly parents do not and cannot forgive on repentance merely.

3. Therefore, in like cases, God cannot and will not forgive upon repentance merely.

Now, I have only to show that the ordinary relation of the sinner to his Maker, is of this exceptional character, so that in like cases, an earthly parent would not forgive his child simply on the ground of sorrow for his sin, and I have turned your own reasoning fatally against you. I say, then: —

1. Whenever the simple relation of parent and child is complicated with another relation which introduces principles that would make it inexpedient and improper to allow the ordinary laws of the parental relation to take their course, then earthly parents do not forgive

their children simply because they are sorry for their sin. Let me illustrate this: —

Zaleucus was the first ruler of the Greeks who gave them a code of written laws. One of those laws decreed the putting out of the two eyes, as the punishment for a certain offence. Not long afterward his own son committed that offence. Now, as a father, simply, he could have forgiven his son on the ground of sincere penitence. But, as a magistrate, he had no such authority. To forgive his son simply for his penitence, looked at from his position as a ruler, would be to say to his subjects: that law is unjust and ought not to be executed; because if it is just and ought to be executed, it ought to be executed upon his own son, as much as upon the son of any other citizen. The parental, became, at once, so complicated with the governmental relation, that its ordinary laws would not apply. Zaleucus solved the problem thus presented, by putting out one of his son's eyes, and one of his own, that the law might have its two eyes as a testimony to its justice and majesty, and that his poor son might not be made totally blind.

Suppose some President of the United States to be so unfortunate as to have a son who should crown a long career of profligacy by becoming a pirate upon the high seas. Suppose him to be taken captive by one of our vessels of war, in the very act of sacking a defenceless ship, and murdering her passengers for their gold. He is brought home, tried, and condemned to death. As a father, the President might forgive him when reasonably convinced that he was truly penitent. But could he rightly do so as President of the United States? Would not the whole nation feel as if the majesty of law had

suffered sacrilege, if the miscreant should escape the punishment of his crimes simply because of a relationship which, in reality, aggravates the offence, by increasing the hight of intelligence and privilege from which he fell?

Plainly, then, when the parental is thus complicated with the governmental relation, earthly parents cannot, and ought not, to forgive their children merely because they are sorry for their sin.

2. But the parental relation of God to his human creatures is, *in all cases*, complicated by the existence of a governmental relation almost precisely identical with that which I have just illustrated. God is the ruler of the universe. He has promulgated a law which every one of his children is most solemnly bound to obey. Severe, yet just penalties, overhang all transgression of it. And every sin which calls for penitence, is a sin because it is a transgression of that law, and for no other reason. He is grieved as a father, because he is disobeyed as a ruler. When, then, one of his children comes to him confessing and repenting of a long catalogue of wrong doings, it is also a rebellious subject of his government, standing before his tribunal and pleading guilty to a series of transgressions against his just and necessary law.

Zaleucus could not forgive the adulterer simply because he was his son, without trampling his own statutes under foot. The President could not forgive the pirate, simply because he was his son, on repentance alone. So neither can God the Judge — if his conduct is analogous to that of earthly parents — forgive his children their offences, on repentance alone, because

every one of those offences is an act of disobedience to his law; complicating, of necessity, his position as a father, with his position as a ruler.

3. It would follow, therefore, even if it were true that there is such an analogy between the relation of God and man, and that of parent and child, as to make it safe to reason on the supposition that the laws of forgiveness which apply to the one case, will hold good in the other; that God cannot forgive men simply when, and because, they are sorry for their sins, because earthly parents do not, and cannot, forgive their children for repentance alone, when they are situated toward them in circumstances analogous to those which exist in the ordinary relations between the Creator and his creatures.

If, then, as I have shown, there is really no sufficient evidence that there is such analogy between the relation of God to man, and the relation of parent to child, as to make it safe to say that what is true in the one case, will be true in the other; and if it be true further, as I have also shown, that such analogy, did it exist, would render it certain that God could not forgive on repentance merely, because the parent never forgives his child on repentance merely, when he is situated toward him as God is always situated toward all his human creatures; it must follow that this attempted demonstration from the analogy of the parental relation of the sufficiency of repentance alone to secure the pardon of sin, is, in every form, and every sense, a failure. It leaves the question just where it found it — to be decided upon other grounds.

II. *I remark, in the second place, that as you cannot*

logically defend your theory that simple sorrow for sin is, of itself, sufficient to secure forgiveness, from the analogy of the parental relation, so you cannot defend it by the argument that it seems reasonable to yourself that it should be so.

Of course you will not understand that I ask you to believe any thing on this subject or any other, that does not seem reasonable to yourselves. That is not the question now at issue. The question is, is a thing necessarily true, because it seems reasonable to us that it should be true?

That there is no *absolute* certainty involved in the fact that forgiveness for repentance merely, seems reasonable to a man, becomes clear the moment it is remembered that the same argument, if good, in one case, to establish this proposition, is just as good, in another, to establish its opposite. You believe it, because it seems reasonable to you. I believe its opposite, for the same reason. Both cannot be true. My certainty is as good as yours, and neither is good for any thing, against, or in the absence of, other evidence.

But your own reason will endorse the assertion, the moment it is clearly comprehended, that the conditions of human forgiveness, and all questions of what is reasonable and proper in regard to that matter, rest with God, and not with us, for decision.

Nothing is more clear than that when your neighbor has wronged you, by the very act he puts the power of prescribing the conditions on which you will be reconciled again, into your hand. *You* can best judge how great is the injury. You see relations of it which he cannot see. And you feel that it is your place to pre-

scribe to him the conditions on which a reconciliation may take place between you. Everybody's common sense assents to this. And, in so doing, it settles the question that, since we are the offenders, it is for God to prescribe the conditions on which he will forgive us. He knows best the actual wrong that has been done. He can see all the wide-spread and eternal relations of the subject. And if he says that he can and will forgive us on repentance alone, that settles the matter. If he says that repentance is not enough, *that* settles it. The reasonableness, in *our* eyes, of any other course than that which he prescribes, cannot make it *his* course; cannot make it truth. Because it is common sense that he, the offended one, and not we, the offenders, should prescribe conditions of peace between us.

I insist, then, that neither from any assumed analogy growing out of the parental relation, nor from any assumed reasonableness to your own mind, are you authorized to infer that God will, as a matter of fact, forgive sin, on the ground of repentance alone.

III. *It is worthy of notice here, that there seems to be something in the nature of man which demands more than simple repentance, before it can feel at rest about the forgiveness of its sins.*

If such a feeling exists, God planted it in the human breast, and we may look upon it as — in an important sense — a witness from him. I know that some of the old moralists considered repentance as sufficient. Seneca said — *quem pœnitet peccasse pene est innocens* — he who has repented is almost innocent. Yet we have, on the other hand, the early and almost universal custom of sacrifices for sin, to testify that men, unenlight-

ened by revelation, did not feel safe in sorrow for sin alone, but felt a desire, in some way, to propitiate the offended Deity, and make expiation for their guilt. And the feeling, to this day, is almost universal, in the minds of thoughtful men, that something more than penitence is necessary for acceptance with God. Grant that penitence is sincere, it cannot undo the wrong that has been done; it cannot restore the soul's inward purity, debauched by sin; it will be at best, fitful and defective, and will hardly, even to its own hope, entirely cover the future ground of life, while it must leave the soul in painful uncertainty with respect to the offences of youth and riper years, long since gone by; even lapsed from memory, in many instances, and so, slid beyond the restorative power of penitence — for how can a man confess and repent of a sin which he has forgotten?

If you say that there is no force in this argument, because *you* are not conscious of this alleged demand in human nature for something beyond penitence as the condition of peace, I reply: you may not have any consciousness of it now; you may never have had such consciousness; but you have no security that you never will have it. Many a man has lived long years without it, to find it burst forth in terrible majesty from the concealed depths of his soul, in the hour of trial, and sickness, and dissolution. Not till your limbs are folded in the cold calmness of death, and your last experience of earth has traced itself upon the tablets of memory, and been recorded on high, can you say with certainty, that you are a stranger to this feeling. But if it comes suddenly upon your last hour, it may come

too late for any thing except the embitterment of your departure!

Is it not worth your while to consider that thousands on thousands of men who have lived and died Christians — even in the eye of the sternest critic, honest in their faith, and beautiful in the graces of their benevolent and heroic life — have not only felt that repentance alone could not secure their pardon, but that repentance alone *did* not secure it? It is a matter of experience with them. And on no point of their experience are they clearer and more emphatic than this. But let us pass: —

IV. *In the fourth place, to an examination of the testimony of God himself, as found in His Holy Word.*

We remember that since he is the offended one, and we are the offenders, it rightly rests with him to dictate the conditions on which he will restore us to his favor. Those conditions the Bible sets forth.

1. It says that Christ was manifested to take away our sins. "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified," etc. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye are healed." "For Christ also hath once suffered

for sins — the just for the unjust — that he might bring us to God." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Now all these passages, and scores of others, which it is needless to quote, unequivocally assert that the object of Christ's mission to earth, and of his death on Calvary, was to facilitate the pardon of human guilt. But if repentance alone is a sufficient ground of forgiveness, he came to no purpose; because the power of repentance is a prerogative of the human mind — involved in the very existence of the power to sin — and men had that power just as really and just as fully before he came, and without any reference to his coming, as they have it now. Paul told the Galatians that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" which is the same as to say that, if under the law it were possible for men to be saved, Christ's coming was useless. Much more would it be useless, if he who has offended that law, has it in his power, at any moment, by simple sorrow for his sin, to restore himself to the divine favor. All those passages, then, which set forth Christ and his cross as having any thing to do with human salvation, are so many denials that repentance alone can be the ground of pardon.

2. Examine further God's announcement of the conditions of salvation. And here we need to remember, that, as repentance is agreed on all hands to be one of those conditions, we must expect to find many texts exhorting to that alone, without any statement in immediate connection that it is not enough; for the Gospel sometimes concentrates its appeal upon one duty, and sometimes upon another. Those texts I shall not

quote, because we are agreed that they are in the New Testament, and are binding on us. The real question is, does the Bible ever make any thing besides repentance, a condition of salvation. Take these passages in answer: —

Paul, in giving, at Miletus, a summary of the ministry which he had exercised among the churches, says: "I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life," He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "By him, all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." I add one more passage only. It is Paul's condemnation of the Jews for depending upon repentance alone. "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted

themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

These Scriptures seem to me to teach three things, beyond denial: —

1. That sinners may be forgiven.

2. That they must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be forgiven.

3. That whatever else they may do, if they do not believe on the Lord Jesus, they cannot be forgiven.

This being true, no further argument is needed to prove that repentance without such belief, is insufficient and void.

Into the reason of this divine provision of a cross and one hanging on it, and demand that, in addition to repenting of his sin, the sinner should believe in Christ, we do not need to go in detail here. I have already hinted at it, in saying that God's relation to us as a parent, is so complicated with his relation to us as a moral governor, that it is impossible for him to forgive upon simple repentance, without making void his law. Just here, the New Testament teaches us, the sacrifice of Christ comes in "to magnify the law and make it honorable," for "what the law could not do in that it was weak, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," so that there is therefore now "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Here I rest my argument. I have endeavored to prove to you: —

1. That because God is our Heavenly Father, you

cannot thence argue that he will forgive us on simple repentance, because the analogy between the fatherhood of God, and that of man, is too imperfect to bear the weight of such an argument, and because, even if that analogy should hold, it would not prove this point, inasmuch as earthly parents never forgive their children on the simple ground of sorrow for sin, when the parental, is complicated with the governmental relation, as it is in every instance between God and man.

2. I have sought to prove that the reasonableness of forgiveness on repentance merely — in your own estimation — is not an argument sufficient to establish it as a fact, because it is opposed by an opposite conviction in the minds of other men, and because since we are the offenders, and God the offended party, it does not justly belong to our reason, but to His, to fix the terms of reconciliation between us.

3. I have argued that there is, in the human mind, or rather in the human conscience, an innate feeling which demands something more than repentance, and refuses to rely on that alone for a comfortable assurance of acceptance with God, and that this feeling is a witness of the truth, placed within us by our Creator to incline us to that course which our safety demands.

4. I have urged the direct testimony of God's word. I have shown you that, by many voices, the Gospel asserts that Christ was manifested to take away our sins, while that manifestation would have been superfluous and inexplicable, if simple sorrow for sin would restore us to God. And, finally, I have shown you that the terms of salvation — distinctly announced by Christ and his Apostles, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and

iterated and reiterated from the first page of Matthew's Gospel to the last paragraph of the Apocalypse, demand repentance indeed, but repentance *and* faith, repentance *and* belief in Christ, repentance *and* the renunciation of all dependence on ourselves, coupled with childlike trust in the mercy of God, through Christ, and for Christ's sake.

What, now, is the practical issue of all this, but that I should say to you, and each one of you, in the words of our text: — "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, *if perhaps* the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

If perhaps! It is not *certain*, if you do repent, that God will forgive you; — that is: you must repent in his way, and on his conditions; to the acknowledging of the truth, and the performance of it; believing on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation.

You cannot be saved without repentance. You cannot be saved *with* it, without faith in Christ and obedience: "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved — neither is there salvation in any other."

Take care how you trust to your impressions more than God's plain commands! It is not safe!

There was once a father who lived, with a sweet family of children, upon the bank of a broad river. In summer time it was so shallow that they could wade across, by help of stepping stones in the deepest part. The bridge was a long way above. One morning the father sent his two oldest boys, of the ages of ten and twelve years, across on an errand to a distant neighbor's, with leave to spend the day. About noon the river be-

gan to rise. There had been a terrible thunder-storm a few miles above, and the rain made a freshet. He thought, at once, of his boys. It had not rained there, and they would have no warning. It was too late for him to go round over the bridge to meet them. He had no boat. He did not know how to swim. So he sat down on the bank, with an anxious heart, and strained his eyes to catch their advancing forms. Just at dark, he saw them, hand in hand, coming cheerily along. He shouted at the top of his voice. The river roared. He shouted again. The river roared. He could see them wading in, all unconscious, into the still water near the shore. Almost frantic with alarm, he shouted again: — "Go round by the bridge — it isn't safe to wade across!" They heard him then. But they did not know there had been a freshet. All was still where they were. They were already a quarter of the way across. It was long and dark to go round. They thought their father was over-careful, and they would show him that they were braver than he thought. So they kept on. The roar of the river drowned their shrieks. The agonized father found their bodies next day, stranded miles below.

Fellow sinner, take care; God says simple repentance is not safe. Go round by the bridge which he has built. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

IV.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.*

JOB XXIII: 2, 3

EVEN TO-DAY IS MY COMPLAINT BITTER; MY STROKE IS HEAVIER THAN MY GROANING. OH, THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM! THAT I MIGHT COME EVEN TO HIS SEAT!

THIS cry out of the depths of a troubled heart, suggests an affecting picture. Away in the Arabian desert we see an old man; disappointed, afflicted, diseased — with rent mantle and shaven head; sitting in the dust, in grief so great, that the friends who have come to mourn with him, and to comfort him, forget the poor words they had pondered, and can only lift up their voices and weep. At length the pent-up flood within him forces a passage through the lips, and, in his agony, he opens his mouth and begs God to let the day perish wherein he was born. Then follow words — of sympathy, of counsel, of reproof of what they thought was wrong in his spirit — from his friends. They assume that his trouble is the consequence of his sin. They urge him, therefore, to repent, saying: "acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace, thereby good shall

* Pine Street Church, May 9th, 1858.

come unto thee." "Then answered Job, and said, even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning," — what I suffer under the hand of God, is more than I can express in speech or sound — "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"

I suppose that there are some here present who can enter — more or less vividly — into sympathy with these utterances of the smitten patriarch; who have been so led, by the Spirit of God, to see the depravity of their hearts, and the ingratitude, rebellion, and wickedness of their lives, that they can say 'even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than even my groaning can express;' and who may have been graciously prepared so to long for the deliverance which is of God through Christ, that they can also add, with genuine sincerity, 'Oh, that *I* knew where I might find him, that *I* might come even to his seat.' If there is one such burdened, grieving heart in this assembly; which is sick of itself; which is appalled at itself; which longs to be delivered from the body of its death; which is seeking Christ, if haply it may feel after him and find him, yet which gropeth at noonday in its search as the blind gropeth in darkness, and has not prospered in the way; if there is *one* such person here this morning, I say: dear fellow-sinner, will you let me take you by the hand, and here, and now, will you let me show you how you may find him, and lead you to his seat? Are you *willing* to go to him; willing to become a Christian, to-day, if you can only clearly see the way to the cross? Listen, then, and as God shall help me, I will try, as simply and as practically as possible, to explain to you the

successive steps in the way of salvation. God be thanked that they are so few, so simple!

Salvation! — The word itself implies, what your own convicted consciousness asserts, that the work which you need to have done in your heart, is a work of deliverance from danger. This danger grows out of the three-fold fact — that you are a sinner; that you are a sinner condemned and lost; and that neither your own, nor any human power can save you. The first step in the way of salvation is humbly, heartily, without any mental reservation or qualification, to believe this.

I. *Believe that you are a sinner.*

Believe this, not in an abstract and general way, as a proposition which, in some sense, cannot be denied by one who does not claim perfection; but believe it in that broadest, deepest, most entire and most specific sense which makes it apply to every moment of life, every thought of the intellect, every emotion of the sensibility, every volition of the will, every fact of the humanity: which shall make you feel that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, that from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no moral soundness in you, but only spiritual wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, prompting you — like the poor leper in whom the plague was — to rend your clothes and cry "unclean, unclean!" Without the least exaggeration, is it not so? The Apostle says that sin is the transgression of the law, which law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. And Christ says that the law is: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love

thy neighbor as thyself. That is a law neither arbitrary nor severe, but just, holy, good; beautiful in its adaptation to man as a creature; one which, if obeyed, would make him perfectly happy in God, and in his fellow-men; perfectly happy on earth waiting for heaven; perfectly happy in heaven, as the reward and crown of earth!

'Love God with *all* the heart, soul, mind, strength; with all the faculties, and in respect to every moment, and every act!' You have not done *this!* You never did it. You have seldom thought of God, at all. You have always loved yourself better than you have loved Him. Your daily petition for light and guidance — uttered with the life, rather than the lips — has been not 'Father! Dear Father! what wilt *thou* have me to do, to-day?' but 'what shall *I* eat and drink, and wherewithal shall *I* be clothed?'

'Love thy neighbor as thyself!' You have not done this! '*As* thyself!' Never! Your selfish heart has sometimes planned advantage for itself, from the misfortune of others; has often said: 'Look out for number one;' 'Business is business;' 'Do as others do, and you do well enough;' 'In this world, every man must look out for himself.' This is the way you have kept that law.

Yes. I challenge you, this morning, to remember one single act, thought, emotion of your past life, that will bear the severe, yet benevolent and righteous, test of this great law. Single out any that you recall. It was one of conscious hostility to Jehovah, or of unconscious neglect of him. If you did not hate him, you forgot him. If you did not forget him, you misconceived him. You

may have fancied that you loved him, when you dimly discerned him in the dusky radiance of the starry night; or when you faintly heard him in the thunder of the cataract, or the chime of summer insect, and the carol of summer bird, or the mournful murmur of the autumnal breeze. But that love had no power over your life; it did not make you cease from sin; it was not intelligently fastened upon any thing real in his character; it was not *really* love, — such love as you demand from your child; such as you, God's child, have been, every moment, bound to render unto him. And as you have thus utterly and always failed to love God according to the command, so you have failed to love man according to it. Selfishness, and not benevolence, has been the inward, central, controlling law of all your life. If you do not see it, it is because it has blinded your eyes. You are corrupt. You have done abominable works. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon you, to see if you did any good; if in any thing you did understand and seek him; and has been compelled to the mournful record: — 'he is altogether become filthy; he is become unprofitable; he knows not the way of peace; there is no fear of God before his eyes; there is no thing in which he is righteous, no, not one; therefore, by the deeds of the law, he cannot be justified in my sight!'

I do not say that you are a recognized and notorious offender in the sight of man; a felon, a murderer, a pirate! I do not say that you are worse than others! I do not say that there are not in you many sweet thoughts and gentle affections — ivy vines climbing over and binding together the ruins of your moral nature; —

I do not say that in social qualities, and charitable acts, you may not have preëminence even over some others of harder nature, in whose hearts is kindled the beginning of the fire of Christian love, — not blazing high enough yet to shine out at the windows of the soul, with serene and steady glow! But I do say, that because you have never yet kept God's law; never yet done as well as you knew how to do, in any one moment of life; you have been in all moments of your life, a sinner against Him.

Believe this! Do not question it! Do not resist it! for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and the belief of this is the first step in the way of salvation; for "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith, of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe."

II. *Believe that you are a sinner condemned, and lost.*

Having never kept the law, it is inevitable that you should be under its condemnation. It is just that you should be. Since it has always been as much for your good, as for that of God, and your fellows, that you have been commanded to love Him best, and them equally with yourself; you can allege nothing why sentence of death should not issue against you, and take effect upon you. Your sin has been of your own choice. You had no need to do it; for however weak your nature was, God has always stood by your side offering his help to you, if you would endeavor to obey him. He has waited to be gracious unto you. Many and many a time, his Spirit has besought you to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. But, with senses deafened and blinded to all his patient and persistent urgencies,

you have trodden the path of the transgressor. Hear now what God says concerning you: — "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." This is just what you have done. Could anybody describe your state more accurately? You have forgotten God! You are condemned! You are lost! It is a terrible thought, but is it not a just one, that, if God should call you into eternity, as you are sitting here, you must be forever lost? You have had an opportunity to choose; and you have chosen to sin; and "the wages of sin is death!" Believe this — appalling as it is! Believe it; — such belief is a step in the way of your salvation — for "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost!"

III. *Believe that you cannot save yourself, and that no created arm can save you.*

You cannot save yourself. Try it. You have tried it many a time. You have resolved, and re-resolved, and sinned the same. You are just like the poor drunkard who has nourished his one appetite within him, until it has overmastered thought, feeling, and even volition; and drags resistless what is left of his poor manhood, captive at its chariot wheels. I doubt if there is one in this audience, who really thinks he has power, of himself, to rescue himself from the condemnation of the divine law. Think of it! That law will cover every

moment till the end of life, and will compel every thought, feeling, act, to be perfect, or it cannot be satisfied. And can you hope to do this? — Is there the slightest possibility that you can work such a reformation in yourself as to change, at once, the whole current of your soul, and compel every single drop of the broad stream to flow toward God, instead of away from him? No, no! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that *are accustomed* to do evil!" And — even if you could do this impossible future labor — what is to become of your past, — of these long, dreadful years of guilt, looming up behind you in all their vast and varied vileness — one great aggregation of sins; sins of all sorts; needless, ungrateful, inexplicable, abominable sins? What is to become of them? They, at least, are beyond your recall. The murderer may weep bitterest tears, but they will not put new life into the stiff limbs of the dead. You have murdered — one by one — the days that stand between your birth-cry and this hour. You cannot live over your past! You cannot change the hue and hurt of a single one of your transgressions! Many of them — most of them (solemn thought!) — you have forgotten! But God has not; they are written down in his book of remembrance! Angels may have wept as they traced the gloomy history, but even angelic tears did not blot them from the record! There they are, in all their far and wide-reaching relations of harm. You cannot help it! We cannot help it! The Church cannot help it! The universe cannot help it! If every created intelligence — of things in heaven, and things in earth — were to combine with every other, to plead

with God that the least one of all those iniquities should be emptied of its guilt; his commandment — the foundation of the stability of his moral government — would still stand sure — "the soul that sinneth, it shall die — if thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it!"

Oh, my brother, my sister impenitent; you are a sinner before the Lord exceedingly! You are a condemned sinner, taking courage to sin on, because sentence against your evil work has not been executed speedily! You cannot save yourself! No created arm can save you! You are lost; justly, though hopelessly lost! This is your danger, from which you need salvation. Do you really, sadly, humbly, believe it all? God help you to do so, for through this gloom and darkness is the way to the better life.

IV. *Hear now this comfortable truth, — the belief in which, is the next step in the way — that God, on certain conditions, is willing to save just such condemned, lost sinners as you are.*

Here we need no argument, but only to listen to the gracious declarations of the Gospel. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For when we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man, will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "He was

wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth from all sin." "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "Wherefore, also, he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him."

Here we have — distinct, full, abundant, unmistakable — the assurance that God loves and pities lost men; has taken infinite pains to make their salvation possible; is ready to save all of them, and each of them, who will comply with his conditions of pardon. Here, fellow-sinner, smiles the rainbow of hope upon the very bosom of the dark cloud of your despair! Do you believe this — that God is willing, and desires to save the lost, when they meet the terms of salvation which he has ordained? Such belief is the first step out of your wretchedness!

V. *The next step is the comprehension of these terms.* They are two — simple, reasonable, essential.

(1.) The first is, that you be truly sorry for all your past sins; that you loathe and abhor the sinful habits, temper, and disposition of your soul; and that you both earnestly and honestly endeavor, henceforth, to be free from sin. This is repentance. It is simple, for any man — any child — can understand what it is. It is reasonable, for you could neither expect, nor ask, God to forgive past sins, which you mean forever to repeat; and therefore love; and therefore are not really sorry

for. It is essential — both, thus, from the obvious nature of the case, and from the direct commandment of God. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Now God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin;" "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye."

(2.) The second condition is, that you believe and consent to the fact that, if you are penitent God is willing to forgive your sins, for Christ's sake, and on account of what Christ has done. This is faith in Christ. It is simple, for it is just believing that God *really* means what he says. It is reasonable, for the law which declares that the soul that sinneth shall die, and which therefore condemns your soul to eternal death for the sins which it has committed, cannot be saved from public contempt, and magnified, and made honorable, without the death of Christ is substituted before it, for your own; and it cannot be so substituted, without consent and desire on your part; which consent and desire, on your part, leading to, and growing into, the confident assurance that God *has* actually magnified his law by accepting Christ's death in your stead — so that there remaineth now no condemnation *for you*, if you walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit — is faith in Christ. It is essential, for God says, "Christ is the end of the law," (that is, answers the same purpose as obedience — the natural end — to the law, would have done) "to every one that believeth." So God says that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And Jesus said: "this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." And he said, again: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

VI. *One step more remains, and only one, for I am not discussing now all the theology that is involved in the sinner's regeneration, but, assuming the theology, am seeking simply to point out the successive things which — God doing his part — it is necessary for the sinner to do, in order to be saved.*

It is this. Believing, from the heart, that you are a sinner, — a sinner justly condemned, utterly lost, who cannot save yourself, and whom no created arm can save — and believing that, nevertheless, God is willing to save just such a lost sinner as you are, if you repent and believe in Christ; the next, last, crowning, entering step into the kingdom is — believe that all this is true of you *now:* that God will, *this moment*, as you sit where you sit, forgive your sins for Christ's sake, if you are penitent; that — through the exceeding riches of his grace — you may rise up and go forth a Christian, redeemed by the blood of Jesus unto newness of life. Yes! It is not too good to be true! He waiteth to be gracious! His promises are not only actual in the present tense, but they have no other. They do not apply to to-morrow — not one of them! "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return [now] unto the Lord, and he will [now] have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will [now] abundantly pardon." "Behold

now is the accepted time, behold *now* is the day of salvation." "*To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

> "To-morrow, Lord, is *thine*,
> Lodged in thy Sovereign hand;
> And if its sun arise and shine,
> 'T will shine by thy command;"—

But it may not shine on *you;* and if it *shine* on you, it may light the stumbling, downward pathway of a man who has rejected his last opportunity of salvation, and whose doom is sealed forever!

Now, God says to you, and to each one of you, 'repent, believe, obey; and your sins shall be blotted out!'

It is unquestionably true, though it may seem harsh to some of you for me to say it, that there is only one real reason which can keep you, my impenitent friends, from submitting to God, and making your peace with him through Christ, here, and now. And that reason is, that you do really so desire to keep on in sin, that you are not yet willing to give it up, even for Christ and heaven! That will be the reason, and the only reason, which God will see in any heart that goes away from this service unreconciled to Him. Remember it! Make no mistake about it! Say to yourself, as you go out upon the sidewalk: 'I am going home a sinner — just as I came — a poor, wretched sinner, in danger of eternal death every moment; and the *only* reason is, because I love to be a sinner; because, after all, I do *prefer* my sinful meanness, my ingratitude, my rebellion, my wretchedness, to the holy peace of God which passeth all understanding. If I could have brought

myself to have given up my sweet sins, I might have been forgiven, this morning, and gone home a new creature in Christ Jesus!'

I know some of you will start back from this with horror, and say: 'that is not my case; that is not the reason which keeps me from repenting and believing, now.' You think so, doubtless; but you are deceived through the deceitfulness of sin. *There is no reason but that, which can keep you!*

Do you say: 'I have not conviction of sin enough now — I do not feel as others have felt, before conversion, and it is useless for me to attempt to repent until I have deeper convictions?' I answer: where does God tell you that? God says: behold now is the accepted time. The devil says: wait for more conviction. You know, at this moment, that you are a sinner; that you are lost; that you cannot save yourself; that you need Christ to save you. You know, further, that it is your duty to turn to God, at this moment; that you have no right to go on in sin another hour; that if you do, death may cut you off in the midst of your guilt. And you further know, that God is willing to save you for Christ's sake, at this moment, if you are willing to be saved. And you further know, that God is now leaving it for you to decide whether you will be saved now or not; and that if, with such conviction of sin as you have, you come to him, he will in no wise cast you out. Therefore, if you go out of that door unforgiven, it is your own fault, and is not because you have not conviction enough to make salvation possible, but because you love to sin too well to stop!

Does another say: 'I cannot repent without the aid

of the Holy Spirit, for no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him?' I answer: true, and there is one great danger of waiting, even till to-morrow, — because you cannot repent without the Holy Spirit, and he may not help you to-morrow. This morning he does help you. He brought you here. Why are you not, at this instant, at home, in the streets, the fields, or anywhere but here; but because the Holy Spirit brought you here to bless you. It is the Spirit, through my lips, which now says 'come,' to you. In promising, at this moment, to save you if you repent and believe, God pledges himself to give you all aid from the Holy Spirit, which you may need. Therefore, if you go out of that door unforgiven, it will be your own fault; and not because the Holy Spirit would not change your heart, but because you love to sin too well to stop!

Does another say: 'I am too great a sinner ever to be saved. There are peculiarities in my case, that make it different from that of anybody else, so that I cannot feel that there is mercy for me?' I answer: thank God if you feel so guilty, and thank him more that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to him through Christ. Your heart is worse than you think it is — but, though your sins be as scarlet, he can make them as white as snow! You cannot be any *more* than lost, and the lost, Christ came to save. And Christ now says to you — (dare not to add to your guilt by doubting his holy word, and setting up your individual selfishness as broader than his infinite sacrifice,) "whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." If you do not take it, and take it as freely as your great

need requires, and do it now — if you go out of that door unforgiven — it is not because Christ is not willing to save you, and willing to save you now, but because you love to sin too well to stop!

Does another say: 'it seems to me I am willing to repent and believe, but, somehow, I cannot clearly understand exactly how to believe in Christ?' I answer: you misunderstand it because it is so very easy to know. You look over it, and around it, for some great thing, while it lies at your feet — simplicity itself. You have sinned! You deserve death! You feel it! God says: 'I have found a ransom — you need not die; Christ has died in your stead. If now you will be sorry for the past and obedient in the future, and consent that the violated law shall be satisfied by his life instead of yours, and gratefully devote yourself to his service evermore, you shall be saved.' What is easier than for you to say: 'O God, I thank thee! O Christ, I love thee! I *do* consent, in sweet amazement, that it can be so; and let me never, never sin any more!'

But do you say: 'faith — it is so dark, I cannot understand what that is?' It is just believing that all *is*, as God says it is. He says he will forgive you for Christ's sake, if you repent. And, now if you do repent, he *does* forgive you this moment, and you must believe that he does.

'But how shall I know that he has forgiven me?'

By faith — faith still. If your father should say to you: 'my son, if you will learn the French language thoroughly, on that day on which you are able to converse with me in it, with ease and fluency, I will add five thousand dollars to the provision which I have

made for you in my last will and testament;' would you not have confidence enough in him to believe that, when the day came, and you had passed the ordeal to his expressed satisfaction and joy, the promised provision was made, though without the evidence of sense to you?

And when your Heavenly Father says: 'repent, believe, and obey, and you shall be forgiven for Christ's sake,' have you not confidence enough in him to feel sure that the thing which he has promised is performed, in that moment when you do your part?

'But I shall be deceived, if I imagine I am forgiven when I have no evidence that I am, except my own impression!'

Never fear. You will have other evidence enough, the moment you do your duty of submission.

Here you are, we will suppose, sleeping in an upper chamber of your dwelling, when you are suddenly aroused by the cry of fire, and the suffocation of smoke. You rush to the stairway to find it already impassable by the leaping violence of the conflagration. You rush to the window, but, as you throw it open, volumes of vapor, pressed and crowded on that side by the wind, make thick darkness there.

Hark! You hear your name shouted, in the accents of your dearest friend! His voice comes out of the dense cloud just below your window. He says: 'come here — by the light in your room I can see you, though you cannot see me! My ladder is too short and I cannot climb any higher, but I am here directly under you, and if you will let yourself out of the window down into my arms, I will catch you safely, and carry you down.'

You cannot see him. But you know his voice. You have confidence that he would not advise you wrongly. There is no other alternative. You must die, or drop thus into the darkness, having faith that he is there and will be strong enough, and skillful enough to save you.

Would you linger? Would you say: 'this faith, I cannot understand it? This saviour, I cannot see him? How shall I know when I am safe?'

No! You would leap just at his bidding; and when you felt his strong arms around you, you would know that your rescue was secure.

Just so — leap into the invisible everlasting arms! And when you have let go all hold upon yourself and your own righteousness, you will know that you are forgiven.

Try it and see! It is not obscure. It is the simplest thing in this world to believe in Christ.

Try it and see! And remember! if you go out of that door unforgiven, it will not *really* be because of any obscurity in the plan of salvation, but it will be simply because you love to sin too well to stop!

I have done, with just this parting word to each of you who are troubled because you are out of Christ.

Christ calls you *now*. He will be grieved if you do not believe on him now. Here are the simple steps by which you can find him, even in this holy temple, and while I speak.

Believe that you are a sinner.

Believe that you are a lost sinner.

Believe that you cannot save yourself, and that nobody but God in Christ can save you.

Believe that, still, God pities, and has made provision for the rescue of the lost.

Believe that this provision is available to you, on two simple, reasonable conditions; that you repent and reform, and believe that God will save you for Christ's sake.

And, finally and chiefly, believe that he will do this *now*, and act *now* on this faith. Say to God: 'Lord, I am a wretched wanderer, deserving only of thy wrath, but I do believe thou art willing to save me, and wilt save me now; I believe, help thou mine unbelief!'

And if you still waver, consider that if you let go your hold on self, and try Christ as a Saviour, and were to be disappointed, you could be no worse off than you are now!

Come then, every one, and, in humble trust, utter the language of your inmost heart in that penitent song: —

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O! Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O! Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within, and wars without,
O! Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am — poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in thee to find,
O! Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O! Lamb of God, I come!"

V.

THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOP.*

ACTS VIII: 37.

AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.

ATTEMPT, as we may, to explain to the sinner the process of conversion, by abstract speech, there will always linger around it something of that indefiniteness with which the human mind naturally clothes objects of pure thought, disconnected from actual existence. It is sometimes well for us, therefore, to analyze individual cases of regeneration, that we may educe from them the truth in its most concrete and comprehensible form, and thus more securely, because more exactly, make it the guide of life. And, as God knows this our necessity, and knows that we might easily be misled, if, to satisfy it, we were left to select some man, living or dead, who should seem to us to be a Christian, and were to attempt to follow him, when he might not really himself have passed from death unto life; he has kindly given us individual cases, described with more

* Pine Street Church, March 28th, 1858.

or less minuteness, in his holy word, and certified, as genuine, by it, so that we may be sure that, when they guide us, it will not be the blind leading the blind into the ditch.

I propose, then, for our instruction, this afternoon, the account given us, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, treasurer of Queen Candace; a narrative, which I select to-day, in preference to others, because, in some respects, it seems to me to come nearer to an exact resemblance to the condition of many here present, than that of any other New Testament convert, inasmuch as this man had not been chargeable with any open offence; (as Paul with persecuting the Church, Zaccheus with overreaching tax-payers, the dying thief with robbery, the Phillipian jailer with the intent of suicide,) but had been moral, upright, reputable, thoughtful; and was even converted on his way home from the Temple of God.

It is but little of his private personal history that is revealed to us; his very name itself left out! He comes down to future generations on the sacred page, not for the sake of a name, but for the sake of a principle. As the old Italian artists used — as they do in Rome to this day — to go out into the streets and select some beggar with a noble face, (and many Roman beggars have noble faces,) and, using him — nameless and to be forgotten — as a model, paint his lineaments into some great picture, for the far future, as the face of some august ideal personage; so, here, the Holy Spirit seized upon this Ethiop, and has pictured, from him, one style of a Christian man, newly born.

Ethiopia was the modern Nubia; and both Pliny and

Strabo inform us that Candace was the family name of the Queens of Méröe on the upper Nile; as Pharaoh was of the old kings of Egypt. This man was her "eunuch," — a word which originally meant "chamberlain," — and he had the care of her palace and of her treasury; a position of no small worldly dignity and responsibility.

By some kind Providence, this dark-skinned yet well-educated and powerful person had become a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and a believer in, and student of the Old Testament. Perhaps, sickening of the heathenism around him, he may have fallen in with some emigrant Israelite, who placed in his hand the Law and the Prophets, and guided his inquiring mind to the belief of Jehovah, as the one living and true God. This awoke a strong desire to know more of this new and wonderful religion. Perhaps the same sacred influence which in the former generation had led the Magi to journey from Persia to Bethlehem, to pay homage to the infant Jesus, now persuaded him to go up to Jerusalem to worship. Obtaining leave of absence from his indulgent mistress — not unlikely herself a lineal descendant from the Queen of Sheba (supposed to have been this same Méröe), who, more than a thousand years before, had visited the metropolis of Judæa, to "prove" king Solomon "with hard questions," — he arranges his affairs for the long journey, and sets out with an eager heart.

He finds the old form of godliness still enacted upon Mount Moriah. The priests chant and sacrifice still, in stupid and rebellious unconsciousness that the great sacrifice had been already offered, once for all, on Cal-

vary. So distinguished a visitor, doubtless, received much attention from the worldly and intriguing Chief Priests and Pharisees. Perhaps, at some period of his stay, they took him up to the pinnacle of the Temple, and showed him the greatness of the kingdom, and incidentally remarked that, three or four years before, an imposter named Jesus, had, for a time, threatened their peace, but had been put to death with the malefactors, and his deluded followers scattered; though many of them, of the lower and more ignorant classes, still hung about the city, preposterously affirming that he had risen from the dead, and had been seen to ascend up on high.

The period of his stay concluded, the Ethiopian gathers together his company of attendants, and turns his face southward, "into the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert,"—his direct pathway of return. He has enjoyed his visit. It has strengthened his faith in the reality of the invisible God, thus to look upon his magnificent Temple, and this great and beautiful city that is so peculiarly identified with the divine name and power. But, there is still within him—notwithstanding all—a sense of something not wholly met; a feeling as if there were locked recesses in his own breast, and in the sacred volume, for whose comfortable opening he had not found any key. So—after taking his last lingering look upon the glittering pinnacles of the great sanctuary, as the hills to the west of Bethlehem rose between them and his eye—he seated himself in his chariot, and—as if to look for some better thing to come, without which, all that he had yet learned, and felt, could not

be made perfect — opened his cherished and costly roll of the prophet Isaiah, and began to read. And this was where he read (the 53d chapter): "He is despised and rejected of men, etc. . . . Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows, etc. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, etc. . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers, is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth," etc. He was reading aloud; and he suddenly heard a voice saying: — 'understandest thou what thou readest?' Looking down, he sees a Jew walking by the side of his chariot, who had evidently overheard his utterance, and in whose eye and aspect, he discerns an intelligence and a courtesy that win his confidence, and smooth the abruptness of the salutation, and allure him toward further converse. So he answers, meekly, 'how can I, except some man should expound to me? come up, and sit with me, and teach me whether the prophet speaketh these things of himself, or of some other man?'

Perhaps some talk had been made at Jerusalem about this very passage, and the Scribes, anxious to foreclose the possibility of this man's becoming a Christian, had told him that Isaiah was here foretelling merely something that was, sometime, to happen to himself.

So, now, this wayfarer — none other than Philip, the Evangelist, sent by God himself hither on purpose for this meeting — sat down by the side of this honest (though not distressed) inquirer, and taking this passage of Isaiah as his text, went on to tell him of Jesus, the Saviour; that Isaiah, in the passage under consid-

eration, predicted *his* coming, and the treatment that he would receive from men; that all the prophets had prophesied *him;* that all the sacrifices had prepared the way for *him;* that, as God had been leading the nation for almost fifteen hundred years to become familiar with the idea that sin could only be forgiven when a lamb was slain as a sacrifice of expiation, so now, at last, he had given his Son to be such a sacrifice, slain once for all, for the guilt of all; so that this Jesus, of whom all the prophets had made mention, and toward whom all the Mosaic service had dimly yet directly pointed, who had been crucified on Calvary three years before, was, indeed, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world; that all men may now be forgiven of God for his sake; that he himself needs no longer to offer oblations now vain upon altars obsolete, for the pardon of his own guilt; but that if, and when, he is ready — in sincere penitence for his past offences, and with an honest purpose of better life for the future — to accept and appropriate, by faith, this sacrifice of Jesus to himself, and for his own case, and ready to promise, in baptism, to love him evermore supremely, and obey him faithfully, then, in that moment, God is ready to pardon him and reckon him among the number of his own, — to be protected and sanctified on earth, and to be glorified in heaven!

Philip expounds, and the eunuch listens; and as he listens, his dark face glows with a kindling faith. This, at last, is just what he wants. This satisfies the hunger of his soul. This does for him, what nothing in his own Egyptian home, nothing in the splendid service of the Temple, nothing even in his own meditations on

the Sacred books, had been able before to do. It is so obviously true, so exactly that key which he has so long wanted to unlock the dark chambers of prophecy, and of his own consciousness, that he cannot doubt its truth. He yields, at once, to its appeal.

'Believe on Jesus as my Lamb whom God hath slain in my place? Yes! he is the very Saviour whom I need.'

'Be sorry for the past? Yes! for my sins have made me wretched, have offended God, have pierced *him!*'

'Be holy for the future? Yes! that is what I want — to *be* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners — just as *he* was!'

'Believe that he did die for me, and that God will forgive, even me, for his sake? Yes! why should I not believe it; when there is testimony to it that I should receive and act upon in any exigency of life, and when it is, in itself, so desirable to be believed!'

'Promise in baptism to be his — only his — his forever? Yes! common gratitude, a just obedience to his request, my own influence upon my own future, and upon that of others, make it not merely reasonable, but a matter of obligation!'

'See!' (that same Holy Ghost which had aforetime prepared his spirit, and sent Philip to him, and so arrayed motives before his mind as now to lead his free agency to these decisions, has also so arranged it that the chariot, on its desert way — afar from lake or running stream — is now passing where a little rain-pool, the legacy of some late cloud, glistens beside the path,) 'See! here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized, — to make this consecration now and here?'

Philip answered: 'if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.'

The eunuch responded: 'I *do* believe: — that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that, as his Son, his coming to earth, and his death, were those of Messiah so long predicted to save his people from their sins; and that, as Messiah — the Lamb of God — he has made atonement for me, so that God now forgives me for his sake! And this I believe with all my heart!'

So the chariot stood still by the rain-pool; and Philip and the eunuch alighted, and stepped with their sandaled feet into the pool; and Philip stooped down, and lifting up water in the cup of his hand, poured it on the eunuch's head, and baptized him "into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," — the company of attendants looking on in awestruck silence!

And when they had stepped out of the pool, and the eunuch, not unlikely, was kneeling down to thank God, in the fullness of his joy for the great blessing of that day; the Spirit of the Lord led away Philip (now that his work there was done, and he was wanted elsewhere); and when the Ethiopian looked for him he could see him no more. So the happy man ascended his chariot and pursued his journey — rejoicing; and we see *him* no more — until we meet him (if *we* are willing to be saved by Christ as he was) among that great multitude, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

Such is the record; brief, yet ample! Its philosophy seems to me very simple. This Egyptian nobleman

was a believer in the true God, and was an upright, correct, and honorable man, with instincts leading him to desire salvation. He went up to Jerusalem to pay outward respect to religion, and to see if he could gain there any progress in the direction in which he sought more light. He took his Bible with him, and as he was returning, sitting in his chariot, he read it in an inquiring state of mind. Yet he was not, what we term, 'anxious.' He had no acute distress. He had none of Paul's sharp experience. He was not compelled to cry out, with the jailer's agony 'what must I do to be saved?' On the contrary, he was perfectly calm and outwardly undisturbed. *But he did really desire to have more light; was really willing to walk in it when he could get it.* And when Philip explained the way of salvation to him, and he saw how it dovetailed into all that he knew, on the one hand, and all that he needed, on the other, he immediately received it, without a doubt, as true, and acted upon it, and went his way rejoicing.

Oh! if he kept on — after Philip left him — passing in course through the Prophet's pages, how his eye must have flashed with joy, and then dimmed with the tear of gratitude, as he reached the 56th chapter and read in its third and following verses, the words:—"neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the EUNUCH say, Behold, I am a dry tree! for thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within

my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters, I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

My dear impenitent friends, how simple and how sweet, are the lessons of this narrative to you.

You need salvation; however moral, upright, honorable, thoughtful, you may be.

You can be converted here and now; even if you are not agonized with 'conviction.'

To be saved, you must study divine truth.

You must receive meekly, and without any doubt, its teachings.

You must not interpose objections to break its force.

You must incline your hearts with eagerness to its words.

When God's messenger tells you (as I now do) that Christ died for you, and that even you may be forgiven now, here, for his sake; you must yield, and believe, and obey.

So yielding, so believing, so obeying, you may go hence on your way rejoicing; even though your heart, when you came in hither, was blacker than the skin of this ancient Ethiop.

Will you thus repent, believe, obey, rejoice, to-day?

VI.

THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS.*

LUKE XIX:6.

AND HE MADE HASTE, AND CAME DOWN, AND RECEIVED HIM JOYFULLY.

I ASK you to consider, this afternoon, the conversion of Zaccheus, with some of the lessons involved in it.

When Judæa was conquered by the Romans, Cæsar levied taxes upon all its inhabitants, and a class of officers, called publicans, was appointed to collect those taxes; who appear to have been paid by a percentage of their collections. Naturally enough, they were, therefore, tempted to oppress the people by illegal exactions, that they might enrich themselves the more. Thus they gradually became noted for their violence and extortions; so that Theocritus said he considered "the bear and the lion the most cruel among the beasts of the forest, and the publican, among the beasts of the city." In our Saviour's time, the very name was one of reproach and contempt, so that Christ — using the popular language to give force to his remark — once

* Pine Street Church, April 4th, 1858.

said, of the incorrigible offender, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This office was, indeed, especially odious to the Jews, because they regarded the whole business of the payment of tribute to Cæsar, as illegal, and looked upon the publicans much as our fathers looked upon the officers of the British crown, who attempted to collect the odious 'stamp' tax; and they had a maxim (so Grotius tells us) that a religious man who became a publican, was to be excluded from their fellowship for the act; and they would not even receive his gifts at the Temple, — placing him, in that respect, in the same category with thieves and harlots.

Now Zaccheus — whose history is outlined in the chapter of our text — was the 'chief of the publicans;' or the superintendent of this unpopular and (as it was carried on) infamous business, at Jericho. And as it is stated that he was 'rich,' it would seem to be clear — since men, in such circumstances, seldom amass wealth by *resisting* the temptations of their position — that he must have been unscrupulous, avaricious, and inhuman, and had gained his wealth by oppressing the poor, and making the most of his dishonorable trade.

Upon a certain day in the third year of our Saviour's ministrations in Judæa, a little while after the raising of Lazarus, and the healing of blind Bartimeus, and a little while before the crucifixion, Jesus had occasion to pass through Jericho, and, in some way, Zaccheus became aware of the fact. He had heard that there was such a person, who was considered remarkable by many, and felt some curiosity to see him; and, being upon the public way when the approaching multitude indicated

his coming, and being short in stature, and perceiving that from the level of the street he would not be able to obtain sight of Jesus, he climbed up into a sycamore tree, standing adjacent, from whose boughs he could get an undisturbed view of all that might take place.

Slowly the heterogeneous procession, of which Jesus was the nucleus, drew near, and as its central personage was passing exactly where the chief publican could satisfy his curiosity, and see what manner of person he was, the Saviour suddenly looked up, and, catching the eye that was fixed upon him, — spake, calling the publican by name, as if he knew him, and had known, from all eternity, that he would be there — "Zaccheus! make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Strange salutation from Christ to *him*, yet full of gladness to his scarce-believing ear! Hastily he descended, and joyfully conducted the Saviour to his own house.

The crowd without, murmured; disgusted that Jesus should select as his host, a man who, by his very employment, was exiled from decent society, and was even driven from the courts of the Lord!

What conversation followed within the house, we are not informed. We do not know what precise words of reproof, or of encouragement or counsel, Christ employed to win and convince this waiting soul. Doubtless, however — since no record is made — it was the same old simple message which he had, so many times before, uttered to others: 'repent, believe.' Whatever it was, however, it had its effect; for Zaccheus "stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give" (or, to translate the present verb in the

future tense, as is often done in the Greek, and, doubtless, should be done here) "the half of my goods I *will* give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation," [by a dishonest tax-list] "I *will* restore him four-fold."

Notice that this declaration, interpreted by his previous life, involves an avowal of sincere repentance for sin, and an honest purpose to reform; and that it contains also the distinct recognition of faith in Christ as a Divine Teacher. He calls him 'Lord.' And this man — whose great besetting sin would appear to have been avarice — pledges himself to give henceforth as much to his poor neighbors as he keeps for himself. And he who seems to have made his money largely by overcharging taxes, and appropriating the overplus beyond that which Cæsar claimed; now avows his deliberate determination to review every such case, and pay back to all such persons four-fold that of which he had robbed them.

No wonder that Christ said — on hearing these words, and marking the transparent honesty, and energy of purpose, with which they were uttered — "this day is salvation come to this house:" adding moreover — alluding, doubtless, to that ostracism by which his method of livelihood had severed Zaccheus from the worship, and sympathies, and hopes, of the Jewish nation — "forasmuch as he also *is* [now] a son of Abraham" — that is, repentance and the believing reception of Jesus, as a teacher sent from God, now make this man, so long an exile from the Temple, even more a child of faithful Abraham, than the outwardly Orthodox but inwardly obdurate majority of his nation; verifying that word which was uttered to the Chief Priests: "Verily,

I say unto you, that the publicans, and the harlots, go into the kingdom of God before you."

The record of this interview is closed by a general remark by which our Saviour seems to draw an inference from this conversion of Zaccheus, for the benefit of all who may have witnessed, or might hear of it. 'Are you amazed that such a wicked man; one guilty of wickedness so unlikely to be repented of; one so bound in the cords of his past sins, and by his very position so situated as to make it next to a miracle that he should repent at all; do you wonder that one so wholly, so hopelessly lost; a *publican*, nay, the chief publican, should be saved? Limit not the grace of God — for the Son of man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost!' The very hopelessness of the case of this man, to human view, is the great argument in proof that Christ will save him — for he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance!

I. *This narrative, in the first place, instructs us that no man's position in the world, need to hinder his becoming a Christian.*

If he is rich in purse, as Zaccheus was, he can come to Christ as he did. If he is poor in character, as Zaccheus was, he can still come to Christ as he did. If he is an outcast from respectable society; so that all men should frown upon him, and murmur if Christ should speak to him and go home with him, still he may come to Christ. He is even all the more welcome to the love of the compassionate Redeemer for this; for, the more utterly lost he is, to human view, the more eagerly will he be sought out, and forgiven, by

him who came to seek and to save that which was lost!

II. *This narrative teaches us that no man's business need keep him from becoming a Christian.*

The business which Zaccheus followed, was, probably, under all the circumstances, as hostile to every influence of good, as any that is pursued by any sinner now on earth. And yet he became a Christian. Christ knew what he was, when he asked him to come down out of the sycamore tree: and from his very knowledge of the greatness of his need, he was led, specially, to invite him to admit him to his dwelling. Take courage, from this case, sinner! and, no matter what you are; no matter how much against your own conscience and the general good may be that craft by which you have had your sustenance; come to Christ in penitence, and you will find that he will in no wise cast you out. That heaven which has already opened its pearly gates to admit Zaccheus and Mary Magdalene, will never be closed against any human being, however wretched and vile, who has repented of sin and fixed his faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

But do you say: 'what shall I do with my business, if I become a Christian? I shall have to give it up; I know how to do nothing else; I shall starve; and this is all which keeps me from Christ?'

I answer: come to Christ, as Zaccheus did, and Christ will *make* you willing to give up every sin, and to give up your business, if that is a sin. And if you do give it up for his sake, he will take care of you. No man ever saw the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread. It would be infinitely better, indeed,

on the whole, for you to starve to death, if that were necessary, than to keep on willfully in known sin to secure a subsistence; because you must die soon, in any event, and if you starve for Christ's sake, you only die a little sooner, and go to heaven, while if you willfully sin for bread, you die a little later, and go to hell.

III. *This narrative suggests to us that Christ is on the watch for sinners when they begin — for any reason — to turn their eyes toward him.*

They may climb up into a sycamore tree out of the merest curiosity to see him, without any knowledge of his real character, and without the first movement of desire to make his acquaintance; but he will look up, and see them, and say "make haste and come down, for this day I must abide with thee." They may stroll into a prayer meeting, just to see what is done there; but Christ is there, and says "this day I must abide with thee." They may happen into the House of God, from any motive but that of real worship, but as they sit there Christ sees them; he knows all their sometimes sad thoughts, all their occasional inward disquietude in view of desires which they cannot satisfy, and a conscience for which they cannot find peace; he knows that he died to remove just *these* troubles from *their* life; and his heart tenderly yearns toward them, and he says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

IV. *This narrative informs us that he who would become a Christian, must welcome Christ to his heart and home, as a teacher and guest; and be willing to have it known that he does so.*

We have no reason to suppose that this conversion of Zaccheus would ever have taken place, if he had de-

clined the Saviour's request to come down and receive him, and his teachings; nay, we have every reason in the world for the contrary opinion. If he had said, 'I know thee not who thou art; — I do not wish to entertain thee; — I am too bad to have thee come under my roof;' if he had said, or done, *any thing*, but receive Christ joyfully and listen to him reverently, and in faith, there is not the slightest probability that salvation would that day have come to his house.

Salvation is by the truth. The Holy Spirit converts; but it is by applying the truth to the soul, as the medium of its power. And, if you wish to become a Christian, you must welcome Christ to your confidence as a teacher, and not be ashamed to have others know that you do so. You must feel honored that he died for you, and sends his word and his Spirit to you; that, by their united agency — you consenting, and repenting, and believing — you may be saved. You must go to the Bible, and read there Christ's words; read them just as respectfully, and with just as earnest a listening of the soul, as if *he* were, indeed, in his own person, in your dwelling, instead of by his visible Gospel, and invisible Spirit.

V. *So, again, this narrative reminds us that he who would become a Christian, must not only welcome Christ as a teacher but believe with all his heart what he says.*

Christ, unquestionably, told Zaccheus that he was a sinner; that he was a great sinner; that he followed a wicked trade; that he had broken the perfect law of love so perpetually, that there was no hope for him in himself; that he was utterly lost; that he ought to repent, ought to forsake his wicked courses, ought to do

it instantly. Zaccheus believed him. Every word went home to his heart. He *felt*, in his innermost soul, that every word was true. There was a voice within, that answered to Christ's voice without, and said: 'just so; true, every word!'

So it must be with you. When you open the New Testament, and stand there in Christ's presence, and he says to you: 'repent; repent now; you can repent now; you have no excuse for not repenting now; you must repent now, or be lost;'—believe him. Your own conscience, from within, repeats and endorses his words coming from without. You know they are true words. Believe them, banish every doubt, surrender your whole soul to them, and obey them, that you may have eternal life!

VI. *This narrative, again, explains to us the fact that he who wishes to become a Christian, may repent immediately,—without long conviction, or great excitement.*

"There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Paul had been a bad man, and Christ smote him down in the highway, and condemned him to dark and wearisome days and nights, before the true light shined upon his soul. Zaccheus had been, probably, a worse man than Paul, yet Christ smiled upon him in the highway, and went home to dine with him, and Zaccheus rose up from the table to say—with all his soul, yet not with any manifested preliminary agony of spirit—'I repent; I will do works meet for repentance.' And Christ replies: 'this day [then] is salvation come to thine house!'

Here the great truth comes out. It is not the agony

of their conviction that saves men. It is their penitence and faith. And if penitence and faith can be secured, salvation comes; whether with or without strong crying and tears.

If Zaccheus had taken time to think longer before he gave up the contest, and acknowledged that he was wrong, and began to repair that wrong; if he had said to Christ: 'I am glad I have met you; I am struck by your observations; I shall think of them, and after due reflection, I presume I shall comply with your counsel;' — one of two things would have been true. Either he would have gone back to his old hardness of heart, and been lost; or, in meditations on his past history, and present condition — in order to see if Christ's words were really true concerning him — he would have worked himself up into a frenzy of despair, as, one by one, he counted over and over the long catalogue of his abominations; and, after intense suffering consequent upon such a process, would, at last have done just what he really did do, at first; — cordially believe all that Christ said, and begin to act upon it. Many a man thus brings a load of sorrow upon himself just by his unwillingness to do without it, that which by the grace of God it at last compels him to perform. "I was awoke," says Cesar Malan, of Geneva, "from the slumbers of sin, as a father awakes his child in the morning, by a kiss on his lips." But if the child will not awake and arise for the kiss, he may necessitate a blow!

Let no man doubt, then, that God is willing to receive him now; just as he is, and feeling just as he feels — if he is himself ready now to repent and believe.

VII. *This narrative, again, enjoins upon us that the*

man who desires to become a Christian, must not only welcome Christ's teaching, and believe it, and act upon it, without delay, by repentance; but his repentance must be thorough and fruitful, as that of Zaccheus was.

It is almost certain that Zaccheus had become rich by extortion. Probably his extortion had been, much of it, at least, technically legal; so that those whom he had plundered had no redress, in the courts, against him. Now, who does not see that if he had now said, in a general way: 'I have been a great sinner; I am very sorry; I am afraid I have done a great deal of mischief, and made a great many families unhappy; I will try and not do so any more;' and had hugged his bags of treasure; and if any body said any thing about restitution, had replied: 'Oh! that is simply impossible; I do not now know who, nor where, nor when; I cannot now get at them; besides, I meant no harm, I will try and do differently in future,' — and still hugged his treasure — who does not see that Jesus would have lacked *the* convincing element of the sincerity of his repentance, and never could have declared him to be 'a son of Abraham!' The love of money was the root of all his evil, and so his first volition of repentance was to crucify that love.

Notice the energy, to a Jewish mind, involved in the very form of his phrase. "Four-fold." This was what the Jewish law condemned a man to pay when he had stolen, and the theft was *proved* upon him. But when he had stolen, and himself *confessed* it, his plea of guilty reduced his fine to the amount taken, with *one fifth* added. Zaccheus therefore, who might, on this confession, have escaped with a good conscience before

the law, on payment of one hundred and twenty *per cent.;* of his own accord, as feeling that he is really condemned in the court of conscience, pledges himself to restore *four hundred per cent.* — a balance of two hundred and eighty *per cent.* to the credit of the thoroughness of the work!

When men become real Christians they will imitate Zaccheus in this. They will be large-hearted in their penitence; thorough in their reform. If any, who thinks himself penitent, finds himself disposed to get off as easily as possible in the matter of repentance and restitution, it is a bad sign. He is, probably, mistaken! Salvation has not come to his house!

Finally. This narrative of Zaccheus encourages Christians to labor, in the spirit of Christ, with everybody, everywhere. You will not be likely to meet a worse man than he was! *Speak* to that drunkard, rumseller, gambler! Ask him to let Christ into his house! Tell him Christ will come! Tell him about Zaccheus! Tell him the same door is open, into the same heaven, for him! Pray for him, and with him, in the loving, pitying spirit of Jesus, and Christ may say, of *him* also: — '*he is a son of Abraham!*'

VII.

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.*

ACTS XVI: 14.

WHOSE HEART THE LORD OPENED, THAT SHE ATTENDED UNTO THE THINGS WHICH WERE SPOKEN OF PAUL.

In the Scriptural account of those cases of conversion which we have examined, on the afternoon of the last two Sabbaths — those of the Ethiopian Eunuch, and of Zaccheus the publican — the agency of the men themselves is made prominent. It may now be profitable for us to turn to another narrative, where the stress is more especially laid upon the share which the Holy Spirit has in the complex process.

Philippi was the chief city of eastern Macedonia, lying just above the head of the Ægean Sea, on the borders of Thrace; and was a colony of Rome. Mingled with its Greek and Roman population, were a few Jews. They were not enough to have a synagogue, but they used to go, on the Sabbath, out of the city gate down to the banks of the Gaggitas, where they would perform the ablutions connected with their ritual service, and offer their customary prayers.

* Pine Street Church, April 11th, 1858.

To this city, Paul, accompanied by Silas, came on his second missionary journey into Asia, about A. D. 51, (18 years after the ascension of Christ) having seen a vision, while at Troas, which he interpreted as a command of God to go over into Macedonia, and labor. They appear to have arrived early in the week, yet no special record of their doings is made until the Sabbath, when they went out of the city gate, and finding 'the place where prayer was wont to be made,' joined themselves to the little company of Jews, to worship with them. They assumed, at once, the attitude of teachers, and sat down to speak to those who resorted thither, whom they found to be mostly women.

Among this female portion of the audience was one woman — Lydia by name — born a Gentile at Thyatira, a city some three or four hundred miles distant, in the province of Lydia, in Asia; noted for its skill in purple dyes, — even as early as the time of Homer, who (Iliad iv: 141) compares the staining of the thighs of the wounded Menelaus by the flowing blood, to the coloring of ivory with purple, by the Lydian women. She was now resident here, as a seller of that merchandise by the manufacture of which her native place had its wealth. Somewhere — at Thyatira, or since her residence at Philippi — she had renounced her paganism, and was thus, like the Ethiopian eunuch, a proselyte to the Jewish faith; a believer in the true God, and a reverent reader of the Law and the Prophets, though as yet, spiritually unenlightened; resembling scores of people in every Christian assembly, who are, in like manner, near the kingdom of heaven, without being in it.

As these Christian teachers spake, on this occasion, endeavoring to convince these Jews, and Jewish proselytes, that Jesus was the Messiah so long expected, and, as such, entitled to receive their faith and ready to forgive their sins, we read that it pleased 'the Lord' to 'open' the 'heart' of Lydia, so that she 'attended to the things that were spoken by Paul.' Being thus convinced that Jesus was the Messiah — her Saviour — and being willing and desirous not only to put her personal trust in him, for time and for eternity, but to be identified publicly with his followers; she was, forthwith, baptized, with her household. She immediately commenced the performance of Christian duty, by insisting that Paul and his companions should accompany her to her own house, and abide there; which they did. And when the storm of persecution soon burst upon them, and Paul and Silas were scourged and imprisoned, it was still her house that received them, when, bleeding from the lictor's lash, they were, afterward, 'let go.'

Brief as is this sketch which Luke gives us of this conversion, its prominent points are well marked, and instructive; and we can hardly fail to derive benefit from their consideration.

I. *This narrative of the spiritual change which took place in the case of Lydia, sheds light upon the ordinary relation of the work of the Holy Ghost to human redemption.*

In general terms, the Bible asserts that a work of God upon the heart is indispensable to our salvation. God speaks of such a work: promising to give (on certain conditions) to men 'an heart of flesh' instead of the stony heart of sin; 'a new spirit' instead of the natural

spirit of love to the world; to 'cause' us to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them; to 'give us power' to become the sons of God. And when it particularly describes this work, it calls it the work of the Holy Spirit. 'That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' 'The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' And Christ said to his followers, before his departure: 'it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [whom he described to be the Holy Ghost] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment — and when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.' So we are warned not to 'grieve' the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption; and it is with reference to the indispensableness of His aid — as commissioned by God — that Christ said 'no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him;' and again, 'no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.'

This 'cannot' is the worst kind of a cannot, — a *will not* — as Christ explains, in the fifth of John: — 'ye *will* not come to me that ye might have life.' We are, naturally, so stubborn in our sin, that, while we can,

and therefore ought to, stop sinning and go to Christ, we will not, and therefore, practically, cannot. To use the quaint thought of Andrew Gray, there are so many *bars* upon the door of the heart, which we will not unbolt to let Christ in, that if left to ourselves, he cannot enter, and we must perish. There is the bar of ignorance; the bar of unbelief; the bar of enmity; the bar of pride; the bar of discouragement; the bar of unwillingness; the bar of worldliness; the bar of sloth; the bar of evil habits; the bar of a seared conscience and a hardened heart, so that, even if we sit in the sanctuary with all these bars bolting the heart against the truth, 'hearing, we shall hear and not understand, and seeing, we shall see and not perceive, for our heart is waxed gross, and our ears are dull of hearing, and our eyes we have closed; lest, at any time, we should see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and should understand with our heart, and be converted, and God should heal us.' And when Christ comes and says: 'behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him,' we say: 'No! I am well enough off as I am. I will not unbolt the door; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.'

Thus the case stands. We have barred the door, and Christ is knocking, knocking, knocking; but we will not open the door and let him in. He cannot get in; for he will never violate our free agency, never climb up some other way. If he ever comes in, it will be through that door, opened willingly by ourselves. Now, seeing this sad case, God commissions the Holy Spirit to reach down its kind hand out of heaven into our hearts to push back the bolts. *It* will not *force* us.

But it is on the inside. It has come down out of heaven directly within. And it says: 'let me; oh! let me push back the bolts; consent that I should do it; make my doing of it thine own; they are rusted in, and hard to move, and you have let them stay bolted so long that you cannot move them now; but consent that I should help you, and I, who am omnipotent, will help you; and the door shall open, and this patient, long-suffering Redeemer, who has been standing without till his head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, shall come in; and your joy shall be full: Let me open your heart. Your letting makes my act yours; so that Christ can come in by your consent!'

Thus — it would seem, precisely thus — did the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, 'open' the heart of Lydia. She seems to have gone to that place of prayer, that day, as she had gone so many times before, with the veil of Judaism untaken away from her eyes; predisposed against this new religion. And when Christ spake to her, through his faithful Paul, her heart was barred against him. She would naturally say: 'who are you, dusty wayfarer that you are, a poor and unknown stranger here in Macedonia, that you should be spiritually wiser than all the Jews of old; how do I know whether you are even an honest and truth-telling man at all; and this doctrine which you advocate — have the Chief Priests, the Rulers, the Pharisees at Jerusalem believed it? And this Jesus — does not every well-informed Jew know that he was slain by the highest authority of the nation — the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem; after full investigation and trial, as a blasphemous imposter? You are either an imposter yourself, seeking

your own profit, in some way, out of your attempted proselytism of us few faithful women here in Philippi; or you are yourself deluded. Go, let us worship in peace, as the fathers did. And when Messiah cometh, his kingdom will be heralded by the tramp of Judæan armies going forth to the conquest of all nations — according to the words of the prophets of old — and not by unknown strollers with sandals and staff.'

So the bolts would be fastened, one by one, until the door of her heart would be fully barred against Paul's message. But the Lord sent his Spirit with counter suggestions; 'hear him — is not his aspect frank, and humble, and winning? are not his words like the words of one whom God has instructed? Are you *certain* that Messiah is not come? Is he not the desire of all nations? Are not the seventy weeks accomplished? May not the authorities at Jerusalem have been mistaken? Did not this Jesus do so many mighty works, that, if another Messiah should come, could he do more? Do you not need a Saviour; are you not troubled, and weary, and heavy laden; would you not be glad to listen to one who could give you rest? Hear this man! Behold how the very power of God is in him! Have you not heard that he has healed the sick, and wrought many mighty miracles in proof that Jesus is the Christ? Hear him; believe him; obey him!'

And so — one by one — the bolts (drawn by the hand of the Spirit, Lydia consenting,) fly back, until the Lord has 'opened her heart.' The Holy Spirit has done it, and she has done it. She could not have done it if the Spirit had not compassionately wrought upon her soul, because she would not; and the Holy Spirit could

not have done it, if she had 'quenched' it, 'and grieved' it away; and had not made its acts her own, by free consent. Here, it seems to me, we have an apt and accurate illustration of the general relation of the Holy Spirit to the conversion of individual sinners; changing their hearts, they consenting.

II. *Such being the light which this narrative sheds upon the agency of the Spirit in the work of man's conversion, it further illustrates, in the second place, the instrumentality by which that agency performs its work.*

The record says: 'whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.' It is elsewhere expressly said that 'Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God who giveth the increase; who then is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man.' Paul, therefore, would have preached to Lydia in vain, if the Lord had not inclined her heart to listen to his teachings. It was exactly this which the Lord inclined her heart to do. He 'opened' it to 'the truth;' just as Christ 'opened' the 'understanding' of two of the disciples, 'that they might understand the Scriptures.' Thus *truth* is the converting agency which the Spirit uses to consummate its work of salvation upon the soul. It sanctifies it, 'through the truth.' Thus it is, that we are born of the Spirit 'by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' Thus it is that God hath, from the beginning 'chosen his people unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.'

When Lydia, then, opened (or, rather, consented to

the Lord's merciful opening of) her heart to the things which were spoken of Paul; when he told her of Jesus — that he was, indeed, 'the Christ,' so long predicted; that, if she desired the pardon of her sins, and the entrance into her soul of the everlasting peace of God, she must believe in him; she attended to it; she believed it; she yielded up her heart unto it; she felt that he was just such a Saviour as she needed, and that she could take him for her Saviour, and appropriate to herself all the promises which he had made, and consecrate herself to his service; and not only consecrate herself to his service, but her substance, influence, all that she had, was, and could be!

In this same manner, when the Spirit opens the heart of sinners, they ought to attend to the truth and believe it; making all its directions, threatenings, and promises, real to themselves; as real as if now uttered audibly out of heaven, to them, by name.

III. *In the third place, this narrative of Lydia's conversion, illustrates the nature of all real proof that the Holy Spirit has so opened the sinner's heart, and caused him to attend to the truth, as to convert his soul.*

We see two indications in Lydia's immediate conduct, which establish, beyond a doubt, the fact of her change of heart. She was willing, immediately, publicly, to be baptized into Christ — to pledge herself as his future disciple and convert — and this when such a step involved momentous consequences of a temporal description. Christ's followers were everywhere spoken against; bonds and imprisonment awaited them; Paul and Silas were soon, actually, in prison, with their feet fast in the stocks. To become avowedly a Christian,

then and there, was to invite a share of all this; to renounce all old associations and fellowships, and launch out upon an untried and troubled sea. And that Lydia — knowing all this, — was willing, then and there, to brave it all for Christ, is the first proof of the reality of the change which God's opening of her heart to the truth, and her own subsequent attention to it, had produced.

The other proof which her history gives, is in the fact mentioned, that she immediately taxed herself with the support of Paul and his comrades, while they might remain at Philippi. She did not know how long their stay might be; nor how hazardous it might be to herself to entertain them under her own roof. But she wanted to identify herself with their cause, by opening to them the doors of her own home; she desired the benefit of their constant counsel, and the joy of their continual presence; and since she had a house and some ability with which to make them comfortable there, she not only 'passed the compliment' with them of coming, but she urged it, she 'would not take no for an answer,' — she 'constrained' them to go home with her, even making their acceptance of her request, their assent to the reality of her conversion — "if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord" — in what I have now done — "come into my house and abide there." They could not refuse to go, after that, without in so doing saying to her, 'you are deceived; in our judgment, you have not the spirit of Christ, and are none of his.' So she 'constrained' them.

Thus, by immediate, fearless, entire, and self-denying consecration of himself to the service of Christ, does the sinner demonstrate that he has been born of God;

that old things are passed away, and all things become new.

Such seem to me the great lessons in Lydia's history, namely: — that the Holy Spirit makes the first movement toward our conversion, by unbarring the door of the heart; that the heart is thus opened especially for the reception of truth; and that when the heart has been opened, and the truth received, the conversion of the soul will be demonstrated by an immediate, thorough, disinterested committal of the life to the Lord's side.

There are two or three further suggestions involved in her history, to which I beg your attention before we leave the subject.

1. The narrative illustrates the practical harmony between the sinner's dependence upon God, and his acting for himself. It would doubtless have been quite impossible for Lydia to explain the metaphysics of the matter; and she might have puzzled herself into perdition over it, if she had waited intellectually to justify the consistency between the Lord's opening of her heart and her own free agency; but she found no *practical* difficulty when, leaving all speculation on the subject, she just obeyed the command of God, by his help. Nobody ever finds any, when imitating her obedience. God wrought upon her, and she wrought together with God, and so a work of salvation for her soul was accomplished which never could have been accomplished without God's help, and never would have been, without her consent and coöperation.

There is no inconsistence between this narrative and that of the conversion of Zaccheus, or the Ethiop.

Here the sacred penman was divinely led to look at the matter, and to make his record of it, more from the side on which God works to save men; there, more from the side on which man works — in penitence and faith — for his own salvation.

2. The narrative suggests how the sinner may know when God's spirit is opening his heart. God opens hearts to 'attend to the truth.' And whenever a man feels especially drawn toward consideration of the great thoughts and lessons of the Bible; whenever he finds himself especially tender in his consideration of appeals, from any source, which are designed to make him better; whenever the world seems to shrink out of the field of his desire, and something nobler and holier to allure him toward itself, and he feels like the utterance of Agrippa's exclamation: "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," — let him understand that God, in his infinite tenderness for him, is 'opening his heart,' to 'turn him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that he may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith.' Let him now work together with God — wondering at the love which stoops to care for such as he! Let him —

> "Seize the kind promise while it waits,
> And march to Zion's heavenly gates:
> Believe, and take the promised rest;
> Obey, and be forever blest."

3. We find a hint here, finally, as to the place where lies the sinner's chief danger of repelling the aid of Divine Grace. That danger is spoken of in terms which

have a fearful significance. Stephen called it 'resisting' the Holy Ghost. Paul warned the Ephesians against it under the name of 'grieving' the Holy Spirit; and commanded the Thessalonians to 'quench not the Spirit;' while he brought the same peril to the notice of the Hebrews under the phrase, 'doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.' These varied warnings all imply — what the Old Testament affirms — that God's Spirit 'shall not always strive with man;' and intimate the danger, if the sinner does not coöperate with His proffered service, that He may leave the soul to perish miserably without His help.

Many sinners concede this danger, but mistake the point where it chiefly threatens them. They imagine that it will only be after some fearful and agonizing struggle in which they have consciously fought against deep conviction, and deliberately decided to continue longer in the service of the world, that the Spirit will 'take its sad flight.' Therefore, so long as they may live without such a struggle, they assume that they are safe. But that danger lies — if we may reason of the matter as the case of Lydia would seem to warrant — not in the last stages of the process of conversion, but in the first stages; not among the violent, but among the gentle manifestations of its power over the soul, — when it has slid back one or two of the bolts of passion and prejudice that have barred the heart against the Saviour, and is pleading very gently — so gently that you cannot distinguish its voice from the whispers of your own soul — for coöperation in opening wide the door to the entrance of the King of Glory. As Melville has faithfully said (*Sermons on Certain Less Promi-*

nent Facts, etc., etc., Ser. vi.) "What we would again and again impress upon you is, that you are not to think of recognizing the operations of the Spirit of God by any supernatural token, as though, whensoever that agent is at work in your breasts, you must be aware of his presence, and able to distinguish his movements from those of the conscience and the will. The secret uneasiness, the impulse to prayer, the sense of something wrong, the disposition to hear the word of God — these may not startle you by their strangeness; these may seem to you quite natural, as naturally produced as suggestions of an opposite character — but know ye of a truth, that these are what the Holy Ghost causes; that these may be all which the Holy Ghost will cause; and, therefore, that if ye will not yield to these, and will not act on these, there is a fearful probability of your being forsaken of God, and left to your own devices."

Do not wait, then, for some great inward argument and agony, that may never come! Listen to the still small voice that appeals within, and that may bring the only message which the Holy Ghost will ever send to you!

"There is a time, we know not when,
A point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory, or despair.

"There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and his wrath.

"How far may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

"An answer from the skies is sent:
'Ye that from God depart,
While it is called TO-DAY, repent,
And harden not your heart.'"

VIII.

GOOD INTENTIONS.*

MATT. XXI: 30.

AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I GO SIR; AND WENT NOT.

He meant well, but acted ill. He was intellectually satisfied that it was his duty to go work that day in his father's vineyard, in obedience to that father's command; and the heart drifted on the stream of the intellect, until he said, 'I go sir.' But there was an anchor of sinful disposition, and a cable of sinful habit lying out in the stream, which was overlooked, and before he had drifted far, it began to draw against the tide, and — he 'went not.' His good intention was frost-blasted in its bud.

This man was not singular in this experience. Our Heavenly Father has multitudes of children who answer to his repeated calls for loving obedience, 'I go sir,' — yet make no corresponding effort to obey. There is an old proverb — which, for its truth, Solomon himself might have uttered — 'the way to hell is paved with good in-

* Williams Hall, Oct. 16th, 1859.

tentions.' One thing is sure; no man ever intended to go to hell. No man ever intended, in this world, to spend his declining years in the alms-house, a beneficiary of public charity; or to consign himself to the State Prison, or the halter, as a criminal against society; or to lie down in the grave of the drunkard, or the debauchee. Nobody intends such things for himself. And when, on the road, he catches glimpses of these fearful endings, he is horror stricken; he yields to the voice of friendly entreaty to return and reform his life. He thinks he will reform. He says 'I go sir.' But to slip down hill is easier than to climb up; and in the end it too often proves that though he said 'I go sir,' he 'went not.'

What is the explanation of this conduct, which is so clearly — to the disinterested observer — against that, which one would think it natural for every man to endeavor, first of all, to secure; namely: his own highest interest? What is the philosophy of good intentions; and what the ground of their so frequent failure to grow to the fruit of good life?

The Latins had a verb *intendo*, which meant to stretch out, to turn toward; and they often used it in connection with their word signifying mind. Thus they would say '*quo animum intendis?*' meaning, 'whither do you turn your mind?' that is: 'what are you thinking of?' 'what do you propose to do?' And after much usage of this sort, they came, for shortness, to use the verb alone, and would simply say '*quo intendis?*' with the same idea. The word 'intend' was taken into our language from the Latin, with this purport, and means, therefore, literally, to turn the mind toward any act,

and thence to propose to perform that act. Thus the Psalmist says to the Lord, concerning wicked men, "they intended evil against thee."

The word 'intention' — being the noun of this verb 'intend' — is simply a description of the action of the verb; and, taken in its secondary and usual sense, means the formation of a design to perform some act. That is, an 'intention' is that act of the mind by which we favorably contemplate the accomplishment of some end. In order to reach the end to which it refers, it must result in the adoption and use of suitable means — a step which the word 'purpose' is oftener employed to designate; as you might say of a man — 'he has long harbored the *intention* of taking the life of his enemy, and he has now gone so far as to provide himself with weapons for that *purpose*.' 'Purpose' is one step nearer action, than 'intention.'

I am very anxious — for a reason which will appear before I get through — that this distinction should be perfectly clear before your minds, and I therefore beg to illustrate, as well as to define it. Take any simple and ordinary process of mental action, which we can make level to our comprehension in all its parts.

Here — we will suppose — is a man, who, with the favoring Providence of God, has accumulated large wealth. He has risen from a low estate. His brothers, his only living relatives, are vicious and abandoned. He has no children. He has never married. As the years glide on, and his large wealth is more and more piled up upon itself, he often thinks of what shall be done with it, after he is done with it. He intends to make a will, for he knows that, if he should die intes-

tate, the law would transfer his gold to hands that would only become the more polluted by it. He *intends* to make a will! But he has, somehow, become tainted with that singular superstition — which has had inexplicable hold upon some otherwise strong minds — that making one's will is much like signing one's own death-warrant; and, as he has no wish to die at present, and sees no immediate danger of dying, he lets his intention rest!

He *intends* to make a will! He has thought over all its items. He means to provide appropriately for his servants — they have served him long and well, and they deserve it. He means to give something to his profligate brothers — his natural heirs; not enough to sink them, by its probable gravitation, much deeper in the slough of vice; enough to show that he has not forgotten, nor despised them, because they are 'poor relations.' He means to give something 'handsome' to the Church with which he has worshipped — possibly as a tacit confession that he has not enough interested himself in its wants and welfare, in the former time. And then the bulk; the mass of his fortune — as to that he is not yet quite clear. He wants to do something good with it. He has thought of a college; a hospital; an asylum for the aged; a refuge for the penitent vicious. He has enough to fund either thoroughly, if he could only make up his mind which.

He is full of good intentions. As he takes his daily walks through the streets, and any sight of poverty or distress touches his sympathy, he makes a mental note of it, and says to himself: 'I will do something for that matter in my will.'

He *intends* to make a will! Oh, yes! If anybody were to say to him: 'My dear Sir, I fear you will die without doing as much for the public good with your large possessions, as you ought,' he would feel hurt by the suggestion; he might reply, with something of sharpness in his tone: 'My friend, you misjudge me. I have thought much of this. I have been, for years, arranging my plans with regard to the disposition of what Divine Providence has been pleased to give me as the reward of a life of honest and industrious toil. I *intend* to make a will, which shall testify my sense of my obligations to my fellow-creatures, and which shall put what is now in my hands, in the way of doing good forever, after I am gone.' And yet his friend's words make him uneasy.

He goes home. Quickened in thought by what has been said to him, he actually raises the question, whether the time has not come to carry into effect what is now the one intention of his life. He looks in the glass. White hair — like the driven snow; yet still a fresh and ruddy face! White hair; yet still a form erect and athletic! White hair; yet still an unfading and piercing eye! White hair; yet still an arm that is strung with manly muscle; fingers untremulous with the palsying touch of age! No sign of death to-day! No hint of death to-morrow!

He paces the floor, and reasons with himself. 'Very sad would it be if I should die, without having done this deed!' And he shudders with loathing as he thinks of the foul and pestilent abysses of infamy in which those treasures for which he has toiled, and which he loves — would be squandered, if the inexorable law

of the land should distribute his millions among his heirs-at-law. And yet he shudders more as the shadow of that fell superstition falls upon him, and it seems to him as if to go into a lawyer's office, and ask him to write his last will and testament, would be unlocking the door into that damp and gloomy tomb, which is waiting for him, with horrid patience, at Mount Auburn; that to talk it over with the attorney, would be getting into his very coffin on that sepulchral shelf; that signing the instrument would be like reaching out his hand to drive the last nail upon himself!

He cannot do it yet! It is too much! He will compromise the matter. He will draw up a careful schedule of what he has, and accurate minutes of the disposition which he, on the whole, will make of it; and thus definitely decide that matter — and this he will keep lying by him, ready for any emergency. Doubtless he shall be sick before he dies — most men are — and he can send for the attorney after he has sent for the doctor, and seen trouble in his face. He is not ready to do it yet, but he *intends* to make a will!

His mind is relieved. He is quite happy again. He almost feels as if the terrible task were actually accomplished; since he now has so clear and so good an intention in regard to it. And he spends a few evenings very pleasantly at his private desk, in his own room, in arranging the prospectus of his posthumous generosity. He cannot, even, quite repress a pleasurable feeling, as he imagines to himself what the papers will say about him, as they promulge his magnificent bequests to public charities, after he has been carried to his long home.

His minutes are finished! He reads them over once

more, and copies them in a clear, bold hand. He lays them in the upper drawer on the right hand side of his private desk; — he can remember *that*, if he is ever so sick! It will be very little trouble for the lawyer to put it all into the correct shape, with such ample, and so clear, directions. It could be done in an hour or two, if there should be occasion for special haste. Of course he will have his usual legal adviser; who has been his confidential friend for forty years. And, if there were haste, and he should be out of town; why, he could trust his partner. And if (for he wishes to be prepared in thought, for every possible emergency) if, there should be a call for *very* great haste — say in the night — why, no doubt (with these ample preliminary papers) the young lawyer at the next door would do it better than nobody! And so it is all settled. The upper drawer, on the right hand side: — Mr. So-and-So (his old friend); in case he is out of town, Mr. So-and-So (his old friend's partner); in case of the worst emergency, the young man at the next door!

It is all settled! He *intends* to make a will!

He opens the drawer once more to make sure of no mistake, and slides it in with its papers as he desires them. He closes and locks the desk, draws his high-backed arm-chair round before the fender, stirs the fire, and, lying back at his ease rubs his hands with something of the cheerful feeling of a duty done. He has not made his will; but that intention which has been moving his mind toward that work for so many years, has come nearer to a settled purpose, than ever before. He FULLY *intends* to make a will! And, as he sits there, it is a comfort to him. He wishes he did not

have that superstitious dread of the work, which keeps him from its full ultimation. He despises himself for having it. He wishes the will itself were there, signed, sealed, and witnessed, instead of the prospectus of it.

He thinks, and thinks until, by and by, his thoughts grow misty; his heavy eyelids droop; he sleeps.

He is in his own room, and for the night, and there is no intruder.

He sleeps; — the fire burns low; — the midnight chimes.

He sleeps; — once, twice, thrice, four times, the bells break the silence of the darkness with their tolling notes. The dawn-streak tells where the east is. The bells sound like funeral bells — as when they toll for the dead in the little villages among the hills; where death always brings general mourning!

Are they funeral bells?

Look! cold is the grate; cold the room. Is *he* cold?

Touch him: nay, why do you shrink back in terror, with a shriek between your teeth?

Cold? Yes cold, dead — these hours — cold — stiff! No physician, no lawyer, not even any warning to the next door!

No will!

He *intended* to make a will; he *always* intended to make a will; but there that sits which used to manifest him to human eye; while — in this night time, noiselessly and without warning to himself or to the community whom he *intended* to bless by his posthumous generosity, — HE is gone, like a shadow flitting on the mountain side.

There, in 'the upper drawer on the right hand side,' are the worthless mementos of his intended benefac-

tions; but in this night-time there came, keeping even pace one step behind the death-angel, the shadowy majesty of the Law, and, as the last heart-throb stilled itself, and the last look of the departing soul was turned upon the white-haired form which it had so long tenanted and tasked, a hazy yet Herculean hand thrust itself through lock and bolt; grasping title deeds, and stock certificates, and notes, and bonds, and mortgages — that it might begin, with impartial division, to toss them into the worthless and wasting clutch of the dead man's kindred according to the flesh!

His intentions were good. He was a well-meaning man. He always meant to make a will — BUT!

He said 'I go, sir,' and 'went not!'

And the path to that hell of eternal disappointment and disaster which has engulfed all his hopes and plans, was paved — day by day, day by day — with good intentions, that were trampled into nothingness under the persistent feet of one evil habit of his soul!

If the subject before us has been rightly opened and truthfully illustrated, we are now prepared safely to draw certain inferences, which may not be without practical value.

1. We see the exact connection between intentions and acts. The mind goes through these several stages in reaching action: — *First*, it becomes conscious of the existence of whatever facts may exist which have a bearing upon the question of action; either for, or against it. *Second*, it so far becomes conscious of their importance, as to be stimulated to attend to them, and

to examine, accurately and thoroughly, their nature and force. *Third*, in the process of this examination it becomes interested; the affections are excited by whatever, of pleasure or good, those facts may offer as the reward of action. *Fourth*, this excitement of the affections moves the will to decide to act as they suggest. *Fifth*, the will, thus acting, sets in motion whatever machinery of the complex being may be appropriate and necessary to effect the desired result.

This last only is action. Consciousness, attention, interest, decision — these are the root, the stalk, the bud, the flower; volition — concentrating all the forces of the soul upon immediate action — is the fruit; the result and crown of all.

Now, it is easy to see that mere intention — the saying 'I go, sir;' indefinitely, and in the general, without growing into that determination which will move the forces of the soul to the result — lies back of action in the region of imperfected preliminaries. Consciousness, and attention, and some excitement of the affections precede it; that stronger excitement of the affections which will be sufficient to bring the will up to immediate decision and action, must follow it.

It is, therefore, a rudimentary and imperfect posture of mind. It is more than indifference; it is less than choice. Like Agrippa under the preaching of the Apostle, it is 'almost persuaded.' Like that same Agrippa reverting to a death of hopeless heathenism, it is perfectly possible for it to be, in good faith, an intention, — 'almost persuaded' yet *not* persuaded, to the end.

2. We see in what way it is that the blossom of good intention so often falls, blasted, to the ground.

It is good as far as it goes. All its elements are sound. But an untimely frost kills its, as yet, imperfect being. Some one passion pleads against it. Some one habit draws the soul away from it. So silly a thing as the superstition that reasonable preparation for death, will bring on death, may chill out its life. And the desire to sin a little longer: — a little longer to put off what to him who loves to sin, seems the evil day of repentance — doubtless hinders the infinite majority of good intentions in our breasts from bearing fruit — in penitent, and believing, and holy obedience — unto life everlasting.

Finally. If the view we have taken of the operations of the soul, be correct, it is easy to settle the moral value of intentions. Philologically speaking, any intention is a good one, which is fixed, however faintly, and transiently, upon good as its object. But from a moral point of view, no intention can be good which does not ultimate in good.

The farmer may go out among his apple trees when the breath of spring is heavy with the odorous richness of their blushing blossoms, and, as he sees the winsome prospect of autumn fruit, and counts beforehand the probable bushels that are to drop from those boughs, through his hands, upon the winter market, he may say to himself: 'this is very good; I did well to plant these trees; I did well to nurture them with care; I shall now get my reward.' But, let him go out again, in a few days' time, to find the ground, not merely carpeted with fallen petals, but thickly besprinkled with perished germs — his winter harvest of golden apples become a spring harvest of blighted buds. —

and he will say, 'those blossoms were not good; they were a false pretence; an utter treachery.' And if the experience of year after year convinces him that it is the nature of the species, and not the accident of a season, which has led to the mishap, you will see him cut down those beautiful trees as remorselessly as if they were the most pestilent thorn-bushes that ever cumbered his acres.

So, what real goodness is there in any intention of good that does not grow into an act of goodness? "By their *fruits* ye shall know them."

Here is a man who has become besotted with the desire for strong drink. Year by year it has crept its stealthy hand further and further along, until it has seized the tiller of his soul, and swept him round before the full gale of passion, straight for the reefs of death.

His friends have pleaded with him many and many a time, and, feeling the force of their persuasions, he has, many and many a time, resolved to reform; BUT! His wife has pleaded with him. Oh, how the tears have streamed down her pallid cheeks, as she has begged him for his own sake, and for hers, for their dear children's sake, for the world's sake, for the sake of heaven, to break off that one bad habit of his soul. And his tears have fallen too, like rain, and he even said 'I go'— BUT! — A few days and the old habit has come down on him like an armed man, and he is again in the gutter.

Here is a moral and upright and most amiable citizen. The good Lord who loved him and gave himself to die for him, has pleaded with him for years to be not almost, but altogether, persuaded to become a Christian. He has thought it all over. It *is* better to be safe!

He can see that. It *is* better to have one's preparation for all that is beyond, complete and entire, lacking nothing, before the death-angel comes knocking at the door! He can see that. It *is* better to have peace of conscience, than remorse of conscience; to feel that one is living as one ought to live, rather than dying a living death of sin! He can see *that*.

And when he thinks of Christ's redeeming love; and of Heaven's glorious solicitations; and of that sweet sunshine of rest that remaineth, far above this region of storm-cloud and tempest, he feels won toward it. It is blessed; better than this; better than any thing here; better than any thing else any where! He can see that!

He resolves to be a Christian. He says 'I go sir.' BUT! Something hinders to-day, and something hinders to-morrow; and something hinders the next day, and all the days; and so he drifts along, — resolving and re-resolving, and dying at last the same!

Can there be any question of the moral value, or rather the utter want of value, of such 'good' intentions, that *amount* to nothing good? What better have they made the drunkard; what better the procrastinating sinner? No true man can fail to answer — 'no better.' Intentions are not good that do not grow into good action! Doubtless they are often worse than no intentions at all — for they mislead the soul.

Take care, then! Make good resolutions; but keep them, in the strength of Christ, and for the love you bear your own immortal interests.

IX.

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVICE.*

MATT. XXV: 23.

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT: THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS; ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.

BLESSED are they who, at Heaven's gate, have heard these words sweetly falling from the lips of our Lord! Blessed, beyond our most adventurous imagination, they who, emerging through the momentary lethargy of death, have recognized these joy-giving syllables as their first consciousness of eternity with Christ! How keen is their appreciation of the fewness of the things concerning which they have been 'faithful;' how overwhelming their conception of the infinite mercy of God, abounding over and over their ill desert; how exquisite their sense of that 'joy of the Lord,' into whose eternal ecstasy they are now made welcome! To their senses — purged of all worldliness, and quickened by celestial light — how mean appear their earthly sacrifices; how feeble their earthly faith; how faltering their earthly example! How they almost desire to live their proba-

* Pine Street Church, Sept. 2d, 1855.

tion over again that they might render better service unto Him who loved them and gave himself to die for them! How they long that those beloved ones whom they have left behind for a little season, should lift up their eyes and enlarge their hearts to the comprehension and reception of those spiritual urgencies, which, if they could but grasp them, would so deepen and enrich their piety; so quicken and beautify their life! With what eager solicitude we imagine them looking from the clouds upon the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom; exulting in its triumphs, lamenting over the mistakes of its champions, and mourning their mutual distrusts and conflicts, yet ever striking their golden harps with jubilant melody when even *one* soul repenteth! With what tender interest must this great cloud of witnesses behold these sacred Sabbath scenes, and if we could catch their celestial tones, how earnestly should we not hear them saying: 'Beloved, be diligent, prayerful, humble; remember Christ; let not earth seduce you; Heaven is expecting you; and our Lord waiteth to say also unto you, as (Oh, miracle of grace!) he hath said to us: well done good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord.'

In sympathy with such thoughts as these, let us inquire, this morning, what are some of the essential elements of good and faithful Christian service? such service as Christ demands; the world waits for; Heaven rewards.

I. *I answer, first, great intellectual power is not one of those elements.*

That is, the amount of intellect which a man pos-

sesses, provided he have enough to involve capacity and insure responsibility, does not fix the quality of his Christian service. Whether he have much mind or little mind, he may be alike 'good and faithful.' The violet which the dew-drop bends to the earth, and the oak which defies the leveling hurricane, are not alike in strength, but one is just as truly alive as the other; one just as truly beautiful as the other; one just as good and faithful in its appointed work for their common Creator, as the other. And if a man cast in that great mold which God uses when he needs a Milton, or a Bacon, or a Franklin, or a Webster on the earth, were to devote every energy, and every affection, and every hour of his mighty life to the divine service; that large obedience — though broader in its earthly scope, and mightier in its earthly use — would be in reality no better, and no more faithful, than that of the humblest cottager who, with the same entireness of love and endeavor, toils through his brief and narrow path, making the most of his one talent until death. No man is authorized to say that, in the eye of Jehovah, an elephant is any better than an animalcule; Chimborazo than a grain of sand; the Atlantic any better than a rain-pool; Niagara any better than a rill. 'He hath made every thing beautiful in his time,' and as he does not ask the animalcule to be an elephant, but to be worthily and faithfully itself, so he does not ask any man of low capacity to be an intellectual giant, but to be faithful to himself, and his Creator, *as* he is, and *where* he is. And we are not authorized to infer that God takes any less pleasure in the perfect obedience and affectionate, though limited, activity, of the poor

and ignorant, than he takes in the larger tribute of those to whom he has intrusted larger forces of character. Nay, it may even be questionable whether we do not read in those instincts of our own hearts, which lead us to accept, with the tenderest and most delighted affection, the love and obedience of the feeblest of the little ones clustering round our firesides, the hint that our Eternal Father may give his heartiest heavenly welcomes, not to those who have had most to work with, but to those who have done most with least capacity.

The latest and most learned writer upon the nature and philosophy of the ocean, has settled it that it is not the great whales, who flounder through the floods as if an island had broken from its moorings and become instinct with vibratory life, but the little, almost invisible, polypi, working away patiently upon some one spot at the bottom of the deep sea, which most affect the character and currents of the ocean, and which even help to regulate the climate of the earth. Each minute mollusk continually abstracts from the sea-water, solid matter, from which he secretes his coral cell. In doing so, he destroys the equilibrium of the entire ocean, — for he has altered the specific gravity of that portion of water from which he has borrowed his carbonate of lime. Now lighter than before, it must rise and flow off until it regains its normal proportions. Myriads of these little workers thus create currents in the deep, which put in motion the whole sea from top to bottom, from the equator to the poles. And while doing this, they build continents and deposit islands — in a merely incidental way — beside ; teaching us that in nature and

grace alike, God has 'chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty.'

We exclude then, wholly, from the essentials of good and faithful Christian service, the idea of eminent intellectual strength. He who knows enough to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, knows enough to be found faithful unto death, and to receive the crown of life.

II. *We exclude again, in the second place, the idea of eminent social position, from these essential elements.*

Many a man thinks to excuse himself from any special responsibility in regard to the service of God in his generation, on the ground of what he considers his uninfluential position in society. He may be a young farmer, or mechanic, or merchant's clerk, known to but few people, and imagining himself comparatively very unimportant in the eye of those few. He thinks, if he were a clergyman, a lawyer, a physician, a wholesale merchant, a fluent speaker, a ready writer, a person of wealth, that then, he should feel great religious responsibility; then he should be able to do something for God; but, as it is, what can he do?

He? He can do just what God made him to do; put him there, that he might do; is waiting for him to do. Just that; all that. Nor are God's behests ever insignificant; they borrow greatness from Him from whom they proceed — from the eternities on which they take hold; and they are not to be despised as insignificant, even when they make little show in human eyes. The under side of the western sea, through a degree of longitude is sometimes sown thick with jagged reefs — which come to the surface only in a single point, and

that point, seen afar, may look like a bit of refuse floating on the tide.

What if the sunbeam were to refuse to shine upon the great watery wastes of the far Atlantic and Pacific, because only here and there, at remotest intervals, some white sail or smoking funnel, reveals the presence of animate intelligence; because it has a bad social position, and is in danger of being unknown? The naturalist will tell us that if the solar ray were lifted thus from the sea, the immense evaporation from its surface — amounting, as we are told, to a literal skimming of the ocean to the depth of three quarters of an inch daily, or of more than twenty feet annually — would cease; all the atmospheric phenomena would become disarranged; fertile climates would be rendered arid and insupportable, and the whole earth would be out of joint.

The truth is, in nature, that not one form of existence, however insignificant, not one species of activity, however humble, not one particle of matter, has being in this material universe, without its appointed office,— an office honorable to itself, useful to many, vital to the general plan.

And just so it is with men. The common soldier is as really essential to a conquering army, as its commander-in-chief; the laborer who, with smutty hand and sweaty brow, splits and heaves out of the Carrara quarries the white marble block, is just as really and honorably essential to the graceful beauty of the completed Venus or Apollo, as the æsthetic eye and creative brain of the sculptor, whose name it will bear down to the admiration of the ages.

No man can so isolate himself from other men as to

say with the least show of justice, that, as compared with others, his social position is less influential than theirs. No man knows whose shoulder God will choose to be the fulcrum of the next good work that is to be done in the earth, whether his own or another man's. When Jehovah wanted New England settled with Christian influences, he called neither wise nor mighty in the eye of King James and his court. He passed by Westminster and St. Paul's; by Lincoln's Inn and Temple Bar; by Cambridge and Oxford; and, in an obscure hamlet of Nottinghamshire, he took an unsurpliced clerk, a postmaster, and a few humble farmers, and exposed them to the persecutions of the wicked, until they grew to be the Christian statesmen and illustrious founders of our mighty liberties. When he wanted the Pilgrim's Progress written, ignoring that glorious constellation of poets and prose writers which made that "the Golden Age of England," he so used an unlettered tinker, that the great thoughts of Bacon and Milton in all their glory of language are not arrayed like one of his. And so when God desired — in our own time — to bring out into clearer light and more impressive reality, the power of prayer and personal effort in saving men, he went by our pulpits, and over our higher ranks of education and wealth, and called Harlan Page from the trade of a house carpenter, and the meager learning of a common school of fifty years ago, and made him the direct instrument in his hand of the conversion of more than one hundred souls, and the centre of widening agencies of evangelization, whose entire value the Judgment only can disclose.

His command — go labor to-day in my vineyard, is

addressed to every ear that has sense enough to comprehend it, and vital energy enough to obey it. According to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not — is his demand; will be his final reckoning. And as Louis Napoleon sent the same grand cross of knighthood to the General commanding his own army in the Crimea, and to a common soldier in the English rank and file, in testimony of the admiration entertained by the French people for their respective bravery; so the earthly position of the soldier of the cross will not affect the divine estimate and reward of his labor, whatsoever it may be. We exclude, then, from the essentials of good faithful Christian service, any consideration of the social position of the individual believer. So, once more, we exclude again,

III. *In the third place, the idea of an extended period of service.*

Some men begin to love God and obey him very late in life. Others begin early and are early taken hence. So many lovely Christians enter Heaven in youth, as to keep us often thinking of the old Greek maxim — 'whom the Gods love, die young,' — as to make us sadly respond to Wordsworth's lament:

> "The good die first,
> And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
> Burn to the socket."

But we ought not to mourn over the early dead in Christ, as if they had not been permitted by him to render good and faithful service, for their life here is, in reality, to be taken as only a portion of their true life — a life continued and perfected above. Indeed, it

may be because the Saviour sees peculiar adaptations for usefulness — remarkable indications of zeal and ability to serve him — that he takes a young Christian from the cares and dangers of this world, and employs him in those more grateful and mightier labors which constitute the employments of Heaven.

Nor is it always true that the brief labor here of those whom God takes early to their reward, is therefore unimportant as compared even with the more extended service of others. One of the most godly and revered of the New England divines of the last century, sat down at fourscore, and sadly wrote thus of himself: — "it has been a matter of doubt and discouragement to me, that I have had little or no success by my preaching, in being made the instrument of awakening and converting sinners. But very few instances of this have come to my knowledge, and these not very remarkable nor clear." Such was God's way with this, his servant, who had ably preached sound doctrine from a clear head and a broken and contrite heart, for the space of fifty-eight years. On the other hand, there is reason to believe, that the brief service of a young laborer, who went from the Seminary and his ordination to the tomb, with the interval of only four months and eleven days — whose entire ministry included only six Sabbaths upon which it did not storm — was blest to such quickening of saints, and such conviction of sinners, as made great rejoicing in Heaven, and great betterment on earth.

Who will undertake to say that Henry Martyn would have accomplished more for the general good by doubling his thirty-two years of life? or McCheyne his

twenty-nine? or Larned and Bradford Homer their twenty-four? or Mary Van Lennep her twenty-three? or the little Osage captive, her nine? How much more may such minds accomplish by the wide transfusion of their fragrant graces in the simple story of their lives, and the simple pathos of their pleas for Christ, through thousands of dwellings, and through scores of generations, than if they had longer remained in person with us. In the almost prophetic words of one of the little cluster I have named, "death disentangles the spirit from time and space, the present barriers of its influence, and makes it cross oceans, and pervade the earth, by its startling suddenness, so quickening its power, that it shall surpass that of the living voice."

Viewed in relation to any common ideas of the completeness of earthly life, our Saviour's abode here was prematurely terminated. But a single one of his disciples saw the day of gray hairs, and yet how complete and glorious their service!

> "Oh! not by hours, or full or few,
> Our gracious Lord the toil computes, —
> Some, ere exhales the early dew,
> At morn retire with sheaves and fruits."

Not 'how long,' but 'how much;' — not 'in what position,' but 'how faithfully;' — not 'with how many talents,' but 'with how much love,' — will our master question his children as to the details of their service here, when they go up to seek their reward. And let us doubt not that the faithful, simple Shepherd of Salisbury Plain shall there outrank many great Christian Philosophers, and many an Archbishop of Canterbury

shall find that the least Sabbath School trained orphan in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he!

Having thus thrown out from the elements of good and faithful Christian service, all reference to the amount of intellect, the social position, or the period of labor of the believer, I proceed to remark,

IV. *In the fourth place, that those elements include the idea of the entire devotion to God, of every power which is possessed.*

The complete circle of the interior nature must be consecrated to Jehovah. Every faculty of the mind must be used as God commands. Every affection of the heart must be his, and his *for use*, to the exclusion of all lesser objects as ends of life. As the earth sweeps round the sun, and the moon round the earth — both motions at the same time harmoniously working, and interworking, and interdependent — so regenerate man and man revolve peacefully and justly around each other, while at the same time together obeying that mightier impulse which impels and defines their obedient circuit in the great orbit of duty around the central throne of the Almighty! And as every atom of that dust of which the earth is builded, yields like obedience with every other, to the same centripetal and centrifugal laws, and so both the roundness of the globe, and the integrity of its orbit, are preserved; in like manner is it requisite that every atom of our manhood combine with every other in complete and symmetric allegiance to him who hath said, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

There is no such thing known to Christianity as hold-

ing on upon heaven with one hand, and upon the earth with the other. Many men have tried it to their earthly discomfort and eternal disappointment. "He that is not for me is against me, he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." A divided heart is a weak and sorrowful one. It has neither the comfort of this world, nor the joy of the next. It is afraid to sin much, lest it be lost. Yet it wants to sin a little, for the comfort of some cherished transgression. And so it oscillates between what it knows to be wrong, and what it fears cannot be right; the Bible threatening, conscience accusing, and the Spirit reproving, until it goes up into the clear regions of thorough repentance and entire consecration, or downward into the abyss of persistent wrong and resultant ruin.

He who professes to be a Christian, or who wants to be a Christian, ought to know that every argument which exacts *any* obedience to God, exacts *complete* obedience; that it is impossible to render a reason for any selfish withholding in any department of that nature, for all of which Christ died, and all of which — as essential alike to the honesty of its surrender, and any efficiency in his service — he demands as his right for the satisfaction of the travail of his soul.

When, then, there is in the mind no thought, in the heart no love, in the will no purpose, that is not touched and pervaded by reverence for Jehovah, and affection to him, and sympathy with his cause, then, the entire circle of the humanity within being consecrated, imaginations are cast down, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and

the first essential element of good and faithful Christian service is realized within.

V. *Another element essential to such service is, that this complete devotion of the powers to God, be unintermitted.*

"Ye did run well," said Paul to the Galatians, "who did hinder you that ye should not obey [continue to obey] the truth?" The perseverance of the saints may be demonstrable beyond debate, and yet it must remain true that no individual believer is sure of permanence in his Christian course except as that permanence becomes the result of daily prayer, and hourly trust, and ceaseless endeavor. 'Thou standest by faith — be not high minded, but fear.' 'Be diligent — for the adversary, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.' What mean these urgent counsels, and such as these, if there is no danger even after the consecration of every power has been commenced, that it will be intermitted and the process cease?

There is danger, danger on every hand. It is human nature to tire of progress in one direction. And when that progress is arduous, many and many will be the temptations to turn aside into pleasanter paths. The adversary rages when he sees a Christian giving his whole heart to God, for he feels that his time is short. Hence the urgency of the exhortations to constant watchfulness; the frequency and minuteness of those commands which imply a continual danger of apostasy.

There is something inexpressibly lovely in a constant, consistent Christian life, that resembles God and Christ, in the permanence, as well as the quality of its holy emotions! How it cheers a pastor to be permitted

to lean upon such ones in his charge — to know that whoever else may be dull and sleepy, their eye will greet him and the truth he brings, with the same beaming welcome, whether it be light or dark, in the Church or in the world; that, whoever else may be silent, their voices will speak always the same words of charity and cheer; that whoever else may be cometary in their revolution about the central sun of the moral universe — one brief occasional moment in blazing contact, and the rest of the time whirling invisibly away through the cold regions of spiritual darkness — they are fixed stars in his firmament, shining there ever, with the same serene and blessed light!

We know the mathematical truth, that to get the entire contents of any parallelogramic field, or figure, it is just needful to multiply its length by its breadth, which gives the area. So, to get the area and exactness of good and faithful Christian service, we need to multiply the entireness of the consecration of the faculties — (which we might call the breadth), by the entireness of the duration of life (which we might call the length) — and then, from both, — when every power is sanctified in every moment — we obtain that obedience with which God is well pleased. "No man," said Payson, "can have any evidence that he is a servant of Christ, any further than he obeys the will of Christ; and no man can have any evidence that he obeys the will of Christ in one particular, unless he sincerely and strenuously aims to obey in every particular; for the will of Christ is *one*."

VI. *Another element of good and faithful Christian service, is wisdom, superadded to complete and permanent consecration.*

The Church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Christians are set to win souls to the Redeemer, until the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. But he that winneth souls must be wise. Not mere words — however truthful and well meant — but words *fitly spoken*, are 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' The best intended labor, if ill-timed and ill-aimed, may work harm instead of help. That may be faithfully conceived service which defeats the very end it seeks by the clumsy manner of its kindness; but it is not 'good and faithful service.' Sometimes a pastor of genuine piety, wide culture, *uncommon* sense, and earnest consecration, has toiled in some 'hard field,' year after year, in sadness, because almost no visible harvest has followed his sowing; while some unlettered laborer, by his side, to whom God has given a limberer tongue, a more pliant gesture, and a larger measure of *common* sense, has gathered converts by companies.

John Newton and John Bunyan could not have interchanged functions. George Whitefield could not have taken the place of George Washington, nor could Washington, with all his majestic greatness, have plowed white furrows down the smutty cheeks of the English colliers, from the overflowing fountains of the eye, as Whitefield did. William Cowper and Samuel Hopkins are both precious names to the Church; but they would be names long forgot, if Hopkins had sung, and Cowper sat down to the metaphysic folio.

Nor is this matter of wisdom in the direction of the holy energies of life, a matter of grave import merely to

those to whom God has given unusual intellectual power. It involves for every follower of Christ the difference between comparatively wasted, and well spent days. The humblest of us are conscious of painfully frequent failures in work which we have set our hands unto to do, which reflection testifies were the result of hasty and injudicious activity, of ill-considered and soon regretted speech. Doubtless God desires to have each of us become just that which, in his gift of power to us, he has fitted us to be. He has cast no two in the same mold. He seems to seek infinite individual diversity under the one great unity of humanity. And it is the duty of each human creature — under His general commands — to follow that specific law of development which is revealed within himself by the capabilities divinely implanted there. Faculties misapplied are, in great part, wasted. There is no need to take a locomotive to draw a hand-car. It is sad that good men should ever make mistakes. It is *very* sad that they should so often make them, and make such needless ones!

As God looks down out of heaven upon his physical world, he sees every atom of matter — wherever placed and however endowed — mutely, wisely, working for him, in precise accordance with his own plan, and wish. Every daisy on earth is just such a daisy as he wants it to be; every wheeling globe, poised glittering in air, just such a globe! From Sirius, whose lurid splendor flashes like evening sunlight across the summer heaven, to the microscopic moss-blossom which yearly perfects itself and then decays upon the inaccessible *aiguille* of the bare granite Alp; He beholds

every thing — planet or plant — fulfilling in beautiful exactness, and with affectionate and unswerving precision, the identical purpose which he had in view in its creation. Man — intelligent, immortal; for whom all was made; for whom Christ died; with whom the Holy Spirit pleads; — man alone compels himself, by his own sin, to be 'a jarring and discordant thing amid this general dance and minstrelsy.' He will not love his kind Heavenly Father by nature, and when that Father interposes by miraculous activities, to wake up and warm his sluggish spirit, he refuses to be moved, and prefers the pleasures of sin for a season, to the joy of God here and forever. And when his compassionate and unwearied Creator 'compels him to come in,' he often seems to seize every occasion to backslide, blunders over the wall of rectitude at every by-way; and even when by the Holy Spirit quickened to endeavor at entire and constant consecration, continually mistakes in his attempts at duty, and puts his hand to the wrong task, and wastes his labor, and wearies and disheartens himself.

Oh, how the inanimate things of God rebuke him! One might almost heartily say, with old Henry Vaughan,

"I would I were a stone, or tree,
Or flowre by pedigree,
Or some poor highway herb, or spring
To flow, or bird to sing!

. . . . . .

"Thy other creatures in this scene,
Thee only aym and mean;
Some rise to seek thee, and, with heads
Erect, peep from their beds:

Others, whose birth is in the tomb
And cannot quit the womb,
Sigh there, and grone for Thee,
Their liberty.

" *O let not me do lesse!* shall they
Watch, while I sleep or play?
Shall I Thy mercies still abuse
With fancies, friends, or newes?
O brook it not! Thy blood is mine,
And my soul should be Thine!"

Let me finally name, — in addition to the entire, and permanent, and wise consecration of every power to God — as the crowning element of good and faithful Christian service,

VII. *The constant remembrance of Jesus.*

This completes, because it includes and perfects, all. The memory of what our Lord did, and said, and suffered for us, is full of instruction for our ignorance, of strength for our feebleness, of consolation for our sorrow. Walking along the thorny path of life before us, he has left us an ensample, that we should follow his steps, walking 'even as he walked.' And the thought that he has fought all our battles of temptation before us, and is ready to fight them over again in us, is calculated to fill the soul with a confident courage that can do all things through his strengthening.

How many a timorous woman has defied the utmost horror of the king of terrors, through her simple faith in a Christ that has died before, for her — robbing even the grave of its gloom, and robing its chill sod in flowers of immortal gladness — her stiffening lips faltering forth that swan-song of the Christian: —

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there!"

He who loves Jesus with — what I may, I trust, without irreverence, make most intelligible by the expression — *a strong personal affection;* who delights to linger over the pages of the Evangelists, and make real to himself every scene depicted there; — by the faith of imagination, and the imagination of faith — *seeing* Christ instruct the ignorant, and comfort the troubled, and heal the sick, and raise the dead; *hearing* Christ speak to the disciples those wondrous beatitudes, to the woman at the well-side those inspiring truths, to the Scribes and Pharisees those faithful and portentous rebukes; will find himself daily becoming more and more conscious of a personal relation to his Saviour as the great Captain of his salvation; and will find himself borne along to victory in all his spiritual conflicts, by the tide of enthusiasm which the thought of Christ crucified raises within his breast.

When Napoleon was on his return from Elba, marching at the head of a little handful of troops toward Paris; on the 7th of March, he approached Grenoble, where six thousand picked troops, under General Marchand, had been strongly posted to oppose his further progress. To offer resistance would have been utter madness!

Commanding his body-guard to halt, the returning exile rode calmly forward, with two or three attendants, until he arrived within a hundred paces of those glit-

tering weapons which were waiting to be leveled at his heart. Throwing his bridle rein to one of his companions, he then dismounted, crossed his arms upon his breast in his characteristic and familiar attitude, and slowly advanced, unprotected and alone, until he confronted the enemy, at the distance of only ten paces. The Bourbon commander ordered his men to 'make ready.' Every musket went to its shoulder, every eye glanced along its barrel as if waiting only the utterance of the fatal order. There he stood in that same gray coat and cocked hat which had led those very men over so many victorious fields — not a muscle moving on his face; he, one man alone, they, six thousand men with their weapons leveled at his heart. The word was given to 'fire,' — if there had been one man of that great company willing to obey, he might have earned a Dukedom; almost the fortune of a Rothschild with his bullet. But there they all stood — spell-bound!

Napoleon advanced until the leveled weapons almost touched his breast, and uncovering his heart, said in those tones which once heard were never forgotten — "Soldiers! if there is one among you who wants to kill me, let him do it — here I am!"

A moment's stillness — then fell the point of one musket, then of another, and another; tears streaming down the cheeks of those hardy veterans; until the shout of "Vive l'Empereur!" rose like the roar of a hurricane upon the air.

They thought of Egypt and Syria; they had followed that man at Marengo and Austerlitz; they had conquered with him at Jena and Arcola; they had threaded the Alps in the teeth of winter, and crossed the bridge

of Lodi in the face of murderous batteries, because they believed in him; they had bled with him at Jaffa, and retreated with him from Moscow — he was their general, their hero, their Napoleon! He might have shot down the whole six thousand, before one of them would have lifted his musket for harm against him!

Such power over our human nature has confidence in, and enthusiasm for, a leader whom we love — even when that love is alloyed and weakened by many frailties in the object which calls it forth. Let but that enthusiasm be awakened vividly toward Him who is 'the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely,' and what can hinder it from making us all Christian heroes; equal to every exigency of the Church and the world — who, through faith, will subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, out of weakness be made strong, and turn to flight the armies of the aliens!

> "Let me but hear my Saviour say,
> 'Strength shall be equal to thy day;'
> I can do all things — or can bear
> All suffering, *if my Lord be there.*"

Brethren, these four — consecration, compelling every faculty into God's service; during every moment of life; judiciously applied; in the constant memory of Jesus: these four — the soul wholly working; ever working; wisely working; working in Christ — are those great essentials of good and faithful Christian service, which are most urgent in their claim upon our recognition, and which, having made it faithful unto death, will entitle it to that crown of righteousness which the Lord,

the righteous judge, shall give, at that day, unto all them that love his appearing.

Do they seem beyond your reach?

No! they are *not* beyond our reach. That is their glory, and beauty! Like God's air, and God's earth, and God's water — which are near to all his creatures, however poor and desolate they may be beside — these essential elements of acceptable service, and so of celestial blessedness, are in the power of every human soul. An acorn-cup can be just as truly brimful as Lake Superior; and the weakest human vessel that has yet life and coherence enough to bind it together into a responsible agent, can be just as really brimful of love and service to the loving and condescending God, as the loftiest human intellect, and the largest human heart.

God asks no man to make bricks without straw; but he does ask us each to do just *what we can do*, for him. He has given to us each *some* intellect, and *some* position in society, and he will give us each *some* length of labor; and, if we do not live to be as old as the patriarchs, and are never reckoned among its great ones by our generation — nay, if we are even so obscure that every thing quickly forgets that we ever lived after we are gone, except old Mother Earth holding our mortality in her lap until the resurrection trump — no matter for that! We shall be held responsible for what we — such as we are — might have done; and be judged for what we — such as we are — have done; each exactly according to God's gift of power to us, and our use of that gift.

No man can say that this will not be infinitely just!

And this brings within reach of us all, every essential of 'good and faithful service.' It is possible for every one of us to give all his powers henceforth, continuously, wisely, in loving imitation of his Lord, to the Divine service.

Oh! if we would do so; if but the membership of this one Christian Church would, now and henceforth, do only this, — each his own simple, clear, acknowledged duty — it seems to me that we might almost go forth at once to find the Millennial roses budding in all this desert of earth.

And this, at least, would be secure; that when we each should come to the last of earth, we too should hear that pleasant voice, whose farewell tones still reverberate from Olivet, saying even unto us: "well done good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

X.

FAITH THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS.*

MATT. IX: 29.

ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH BE IT UNTO YOU.

I AM sitting in an upper chamber reading, when some one bursts into the room with the cry, 'the house is on fire; the house is on fire!'

I look up: I say, 'is it, what makes you think so?'

He answers: 'do you not see the smoke? do you not hear the alarum of the bells? the rush of the multitude? do you not *see* the flame itself curling up from below?'

I answer: 'yes; I think I do; you are, undoubtedly right; I judge the house to be, unquestionably, on fire,' — and — turn over to the next page, and go quietly on with my book.

That is belief. I sincerely believe the house is on fire. I have the evidence of sense. I do not entertain a doubt of it. But I keep on reading. That, I say, is belief — in a fact simply as a fact.

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* Pine Street Church, April 11th, 1858.

But, suppose I answer by springing to the door, and, having at one glance comprehended the circumstances and their bearing upon my destiny, snatch my two or three most cherished treasures, and leap down into the smoke upon the stairs, and hurry from the danger before it is too late — that is faith!

Belief, then, is simple conviction that any given assertion, is the assertion of a fact. Faith is that belief influencing the life; is the fact brought in to have that instant sway over the conduct, which is reasonable under the circumstances.

Our text indicates a principle of God's government; namely: that His bestowment of spiritual blessings upon men is proportioned to the amount of the faith; not *belief*, but receiving, coöperating *faith* — with which they are prepared to take them from his hand.

Jesus was going out of Capernaum, after having raised the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue from the dead, when two blind men followed him, crying and saying, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.' Their mode of address intimated their assent to the reality of the Saviour's claim to be 'Messiah come from God;' and their persistent, though necessarily difficult, following after him, demonstrated their eager hope that he might be prevailed upon to relieve their necessity. He passed into a roadside dwelling, and they groped in after him, determined not to let him go. Perceiving their confident expectation, Jesus asked them: 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They said unto him: 'yea Lord!' Then touched he their eyes, saying: '*according to your faith be it unto you.*' And their eyes were opened. The work was done. The blessing was

come, in that very instant in which they had faith that he could, and would, and did, heal their malady. Remember that they had not seen him; could not *see* him; had no evidence but hear-say evidence that he had healed Jarius' daughter, or had actually done any other mighty work, or really was, in any manner, different from ordinary men. But though blind of eye, they were brave of heart, and so they reaped beforehand the blessing which was afterwards uttered, with gentle rebuke, in the ear of doubting Thomas: 'blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed.'

This their faith in Christ, and in his love — so strong and so affectionate, overleaping all bonds of physical infirmity and mental skepticism, and earnestly insisting that he could, and that he should, exercise his miraculous power on their behalf — *this* gained for them the blessing.

And the fact illustrates, as I said before, a beautiful and just principle of the way of God with men — that his giving is always proportioned to our receiving.

God never wastes any thing. We sometimes are tempted to think he does, but it is because we do not know the uses to which he puts that which seems, to our narrow range of vision, his surplus bounty. He sends down the great rain of his strength, and the rills broaden over the fields, and the rivers deepen into freshets; but there is not in all that lavish flood, one drop too much: the ocean needs it all for the clouds, and the clouds need it all for the ocean, and so the circuit goes bountifully yet exactly on. Were the forests wasted when the silence of the green slopes of our continent was as yet unawakened, even by the whoop of the red savage?

Go ask the coal-mine; ask the peat-bog; ask the thick black loam which enriches the valleys; — ask them what became of the old forests, and they will tell you there was no surplus — no waste; but just a reservoir of bounty until these days when we burn the coal, and the peat, and our wheat fields smile with a golden radiance gathered out of the garnered richness of the past.

No. God wastes nothing. Least of all, moral blessings on moral agents. He never transmits a giant joy into a pigmy soul; never sends down his angels with great measures of grace into little measures of desire and confidence. 'According to your faith be it unto you,' — is his rule of bestowment.

Let us look, first, at the reasonableness of this rule, and then examine a little the process of its practical working in the experience of men.

I. *Look at the rule itself, and see how reasonable, nay, how necessary it is to man as he is.*

In the first place, all human receiving is always limited by the receptive power. That ancient monarch who had his table daily spread with food enough for a thousand men, as an idle boast of regal magnificence, was neither able to enjoy, nor digest, any more than if the simple ration of one of his own soldiers had been there instead. You may lie down upon the brink of the Amazon, and touch with your lips its placid waves, but though its great breadth removes its opposite bank as effectually from vision as if it were the shore of Europe, with the Atlantic between, you cannot drink any more from it than you can from 'the old oaken bucket that hangs in the well.' Girard, Astor, and all such men, absorb and assimilate only just so much from their vast

accumulations as the poor man, whose wants are well supplied, gets from his daily wages; all else is surplus to be taken care of, a burden to be carried — in itself and its own direct power of bestowing happiness scarcely better than if a man who can consume only a few ounces of meat in a day, were to try to struggle through life under the daily burden of an entire ox lashed upon his aching shoulders.

This law of the body holds with the mind, as well. Some who are daily in the company of thousands of volumes, redolent of all human wisdom, are the most illiterate of men. More than one of the affluent among our American citizens has gone down to the grave in the fear of the alms-house; — only really enjoying, and using, what he had faith to believe that he had — not what he *really* had.

By the death of a relative, you come into possession of an estate of the value of one hundred thousand dollars. It is really worth that much to you, and you are really worth that much. But we will suppose that you do not know it to be worth more than fifty thousand. You do not use the income of the unknown fifty. You make all your calculations just as if you had it not. You go through life thus. Your heirs get the benefit of your unconscious savings; but 'according to your faith it was to you.'

With your father, you are a child alone in the world, there emerging from the wreck of a family, only just you two. Your father's business takes him abroad. He leaves you, with all possible precautions for your safety and comfort, and his last words are: 'my child, I will write to you by every steamer — be sure to follow,

to the minutest particular, all the directions I may give.' He goes. The letters come. You obey them. Months pass. He does not return. The letters keep coming. At last, you get one that — from the handwriting, style, contents — you are in doubt about. It does not seem like him; sound like him; look like him. It is very strange — but you, at last, decide that it is a forgery. You do not follow its new directions, but keep on, as before. The next steamer brings one that you say is his; the next, one that you reject, and so they alternate — you gathering out of the mixed mass all that which you have undoubting faith is his, and making that the guide of action, and ignoring all the rest. By and by he returns, and explains. He really wrote them all; meant for you to obey them all; meant to test your confidence in his judgment, and your fidelity to him, to see whether you would obey that which was not plain. He wrote all. All were for your good. But you only took that portion which you believed in. 'According to your faith it was to you;' according to your faith the benefit which resulted from such obedience.

If we turn, now, to the consideration of the relations of faith to the intercourse between God and man, we shall find that the same principle enters in, as essential to the circumstances of the case. God is unseen. Christ is unheard. The Spirit is unfelt. No human sense can grasp, or realize either of them. The power of belief only gives them — as before our minds — actual existence. Hence, since faith brings the consciousness of God to us, as our senses bring the consciousness of men and things to us, it follows that faith will first de-

termine what kind of a God we worship, as our senses determine what kind of people are our companions. We may make that old mistake which is censured in the fiftieth Psalm — "thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." We may follow the Bible till, in simple trust, we realize the God — holy, just, and good — which it reveals, with all his claims upon our hearts and lives. But our God will always be to us, just what our faith makes him seem to be — in like manner as objects of sight are practically always to us what they seem, by vision, to be; — though our vision and our faith, if imperfect, may both lead us fatally astray. Here is the key to all honest error. Those who are sincerely deluded, are not false to their idea of God, but their idea of God is false to the real God of the Bible — who is the God of fact — and so they are sincerely wrong.

But if our faith determines our God, much more it determines the extent and quality of our service to him. If we sincerely think that all he asks of us is to live about as well as other men will average; we shall be content when we reach that standard. But if our faith rises to the Scriptural loftiness of requisition, it will carry our life — in its aim, if not in its success — up to the Scriptural beauty of holiness.

And so, throughout the whole domain of religious thought and duty, our faith becomes the measure of our reception; not always because God would not be willing to give us more than we can take (for he is very pitiful and of tender mercy), but because we *cannot* take any more than we can carry. Pour the Missouri into the goblet which you hold in your hand, and it

would all run over except just so much as the glass could naturally contain. Make it larger and it will contain more; but still its capacity, whatever it is, fixes the inflexible limit of its receiving. And so it is that 'according to our faith it is to us;' — whether we be blind of eye in Capernaum before Christ the Jew; or blind of heart here before Christ the king of heaven. Turning now to human experience: —

II. *We shall see that this rule holds good in the case of the sinner seeking salvation.*

Here is a guilty man. He feels it. He is now beginning to make it real to himself. The Holy Spirit has just opened his blind eyes to see the immense, the fearful distance between God's perpetual, and just requisitions, and the response of his life to them. He feels that God's Law condemns him fairly. He has not one word with which to justify himself, if God were to say to him to-day: 'depart into everlasting separation from all that is good and blessed.' He would be very sad, but he could not plead that such a sentence — even to-day — is undeserved by him. He knows that God has a controversy with him; and he feels that in that controversy, God is all in the right, and he is all in the wrong. But God does not desire his death. He prefers that he should 'turn and live.' God, therefore, says to him, 'I have found a ransom; repent, believe, and you shall be saved.' There are, necessarily, these two conditions in all God's offers of salvation to the guilty: — the sinner must cease to be a sinner — for God does not love sin, and cannot welcome the man who practices it to His eternal peace; and he must consent to that merciful arrangement by which the

sufferings and death of Christ are substituted, before the broken law, for his own, for there is none other name given under heaven whereby we can be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. Let him do this, and the sinner has God's word for it, that he shall live.

But here are several degrees of truth for faith to receive. There is first, the fact of sinfulness. Next, the fact that that sinfulness has issued in danger and condemnation. Next, the fact that God will forgive at all. Next, the fact that, to secure that forgiveness, one must believe in Christ. Next, the fact that — all this being true in the abstract — God really does make this *bona fide* offer of forgiveness to this individual transgressor to-day, and will abide by it to the saving of his soul, on condition of his penitence and faith.

The condemned man may stop anywhere along this path of faith. He may have a little faith — just enough to stimulate his disturbed conscience, to keep him wretched. He may have a little more — just enough to accept the abstract proposition that God is willing to save penitent sinners in general; yet not enough to persuade him that there is nothing but his own criminal neglect, at that moment, between *him* and salvation. Or his faith may rise to grasp the blessed whole — he may say: 'I do, I will believe that God does mean just what he says, and that he will *now* save *me* for Christ's sake. All this I do believe; Lord, help mine unbelief.'

I say he may stop anywhere along this path — according to the amount of faith which he is prepared to put forth — and 'according to his faith it will be to him.' If he believe but a little, he will receive but little —

just enough to keep him miserable. If he believe more, he will receive more. If he believe the whole, and act upon it, he will receive the whole blessing which God has promised to them that believe, and will be saved 'with an everlasting salvation.'

It is, then, the sinner's fault — not God's — if he lingers and is sad; if he lingers and is lost. What more could God have done unto his vineyard, that he has not done in it? Having provided a free and full salvation which is accessible to all the world by faith, God has done all that he can do, without forcing free moral agents — which he never will do — and men themselves must do the rest. Their faith must do the rest. If we are ever saved, our faith *will* do the rest. We shall never get *sight;* for only faith can receive the invisible things of God. And according to our faith, will our condition be.

III. *The rule suggested by our text holds good in the growth in grace of the regenerate man.*

His regeneration is a seed time and not a harvest time, and he needs to devote himself assiduously to nourishing and culturing the good seed of the word within him. But all his nourishment must be received from God through faith. The Christian does not see God, or hear God, any more than he did while unregenerate. His enlarged consciousness of the Divine presence is not because God walks near him in the domain of sense, as he did not before, but because his own power of faith is quickened so that the invisible things of God are now, in an enlarged measure, visible to his soul. And the more this new power of faith is quickened and strengthened, so as to bring God practi-

cally nearer, the dearer He seems, the sweeter his will, the more lovely his character, the more admirable his government; — the more the soul is drawn toward him in the ineffable tenderness of devotion, and so the more weaned from all that is ungodly in the world, and allured along that path which 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' But let faith grow faint, and its gaze fade into indistinctness, and it is as with the sailor when the shore line gets dim, and the fog shuts down, and the light is gone, and he cannot make out his bearings, and is driven to steer by the sound of the breakers, when the breakers seem to sound all around him, and, perplexed and alarmed, he cannot tell whereaway is his desired haven.

The child of God who has 'a strong and lasting' faith, and can always see the path of duty, need never be thus perplexed. His stalwart faith will give him decided knowledge of the Divine will, and the magnetic needle would as soon be found pointing East, as he shaping his life in any other direction than that toward which the urgency of his spirit forever drives him, and the urgency of God's Spirit forever draws him. Faith links his soul to all the motive power of God's word, as the iron shackles drag the laden train after its locomotive; if it be strong enough to bear every strain, he will have no difficulty in following God, and his life will be a continual response to the prayer: 'draw me, and I will run after thee.' But 'according to his faith, it will be to him.' And if his faith is weak, he will be timorous, and anxious, and uncertain — meaning well but living ill — oscillating between that which must be wrong and that which may be right; misleading men,

glorifying not God, and being saved at last, 'so as by fire.'

IV. *This truth that God's bestowments are proportioned to our power of reception by faith, applies, also, to His dealings with His Church.*

There are three things which may be said to be indispensable preliminaries to the revival of God's work with any Church. The first, is that the members of that Church repent of all their backslidings, and return from all their inconsistent wanderings, and 'bring all the tithes into the storehouse,' to prove God, if he will not pour out a blessing upon them. The second, is that they pray for the outpouring of the Spirit — since God has said: 'I will be inquired of by my people to do these things for them.' The third, is that they make earnest, personal effort to bring sinners to the acknowledgment of the truth, 'going out into the highways and hedges, and compelling them to come in.'

Now, at a glance, it is obvious that the rule of our text must apply to each of these three conditions. Let the backslider endeavor to return to God. He must have faith: — (1) that he needs to return; (2) that he can return; (3) that the way of repentance and faith, which he trod when he first came to Christ, is the way over which he must now travel once more; (4) that God will help and accept him; (5) that every motive combines with every other to invite and reassure him to set out at once on his return. And just in accordance with the power with which his faith grasps these, and stimulates him to the action indicated by them, will be the swiftness, and success, and comfort of his return. He may linger wretchedly for mournful months around

the vestibule of the palace of the king; having just faith enough to feel that he ought to repent of his backslidings, and to realize God's displeasure at his unfaithfulness, but not faith enough to realize that — notwithstanding all — his all-merciful Father is still waiting with Divine patience, to forgive his prodigal son.

So the Christian who desires to have God's work revived in the Church, cannot pray at all without some faith, 'for he that cometh to God must believe that He is;' and the more fervent his faith, the more 'fervent and effectual' will be his prayer; so that here, too, 'according to the faith' of its members will it be to the Church that needs and seeks the outpouring of the Divine Spirit.

And most of all will it be found clear, that 'according to their faith' will it be with Church members, in their success in beseeching the impenitent to be reconciled to God. There is so great an incongruity in the pleading of a merely nominal Christian — having little faith, or none at all — with his neighbor, to 'have faith;' that it may be set down as sure, that only when faith becomes strong and clear in the minds and hearts of the professed followers of God, can they be expected to say unto those around them who are in their sins, '*come* with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.'

Only that Church, then, which repents, and prays, and labors for the descent of the Spirit with a zeal and holy earnestness which is founded upon a vivid and comprehensive and soul-pervading faith; has any right to expect that God will cause them to be an oasis in the moral desolation of the earth, or use them as his instru-

ments for the performance of that work — that strange work — whereby he is working effectually for the subversion of Satan's kingdom, and the final triumph of the Redeemer.

V. *I cannot close without suggesting, in a word, how the principle of our text aids in the interpretation of many of the Providential dealings of God with men.*

If we could look down upon ourselves, and the world around us, with God's eyes to see all that is involved in each event of our life, and God's mind to perceive all the relations of that event, running before and after; perhaps we should always be able to feel that things are best as He orders them. But, as it is, we are continually tempted to misunderstand him, and find fault with what is obscure in his dealings, and wish to change this, and obviate that, until we are at cross purposes with him and his government, and make ourselves miserable and wicked in the most needless and absurd manner. Nobody, in sailing down the rapids of the St. Lawrence, wants to take the helm out of the pilot's hand. Too much is felt to be at stake. His skill must be the salvation of all on board. And just so — if we only have faith enough to realize the resemblance in the situations — we need to have God's hand at the helm of our life; we do not dare even to offer any criticism, or make any suggestion, but knowing his infinite skill and love, we shall receive meekly and gladly, every event which he sends, — feeling that even the chastisements cannot be spared, or he would spare them.

No matter if all above is sometimes very dark, and, in the temporary gloom, we can make out nothing — cannot understand the meaning of a single sound that

falls upon the perplexed ear; and the very sphere-music seems breaking into melancholy jargon. No matter — all is right above, notwithstanding all. Have patience, and have faith, and the strain will unfold itself to you, as even now it does to those that are higher than we.

"Experience, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minor. . . .
We murmur, — 'where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these?'
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper — 'SWEET.'"

Believe in God the loving Father, and in Christ the atoning Son, and in the comforting Spirit whom they send; and there need never be any sadness in your life, for He 'keepeth thee.' But, 'according to your faith' will it ever be unto you!

XI.

CHRIST AND THE COMMON PEOPLE.*

MARK XII: 37.

AND THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD HIM GLADLY.

A MERELY literal translator, following the surface-sense of the original of this text, would be apt to English it thus: "and the great multitude heard him gladly." Sawyer's new version, lately published, so records it. Wiclif, in 1380, rendered it — "and myche puple gladli herde hym." Tyndale, in 1534, Cranmer, in 1539, and the Genevan version, in 1557, agreed in construing it — "and moche people hearde him gladly." The Rheims version, of 1582, gives it — "and a great multitude heard him gladly." King James' translators first raised the verse from the mere record of a numerical fact — giving, as it were, the census of those auditors of Jesus, who happened to be pleased with what he said on this occasion of his utterance in Jerusalem — to the dignity of the enunciation, or at least the suggestion, of a general principle of his preaching

* Williams Hall, Sept. 30, 1860.

as related to the public hearing; interpreting it, — "and *the common people* heard him gladly." The difference between this and the previous translations, it may be urged, indeed, cannot be very wide at furthest, because every great multitude is presumably composed, in its majority, of 'the common people.' But I submit that there is a democratic aroma about the verse as we have read it from childhood, which we miss from the other rendering, and which leads us to dive under the surface of the Greek, to see whether we may not find scholarly endorsement for continuing to believe that this passage was intended to chronicle for us one of the noblest and most precious traits of our Redeemer's teaching.

Looking carefully, then, at the language, we are struck, at once, by the fact that the word ὄχλος (*ochlos*) which Mark selects here as the noun descriptive of the company of people gathered together, is a word which, by usage descending from Pindar, Æschylus, Plato, and other of the old Greek writers, was specially used to signify the low populace, the turbulent, irregular crowd, in distinction from the word δῆμος (*dēmos*), which indicated an orderly, decorous, assembly; much as, in Latin, *turba* signifies a crowd in positive disorder, and *populus*, a calm and compacted convocation. So far as this noun goes to color the meaning of the sentence, it is clear, then, that it favors the rendering of our common version. The article and adjective which assist to shape its sense are ὁ πολὺς (*ho polus*), words which, in their plural form — οἱ πολλοὶ — (*hoi polloi*) every schoolboy knows have been used since the days of Aristotle, as a nickname for the vulgar multitude. Putting the three words together, I think we are perfect-

ly safe, then, in saying, that, by ὁ πολὺς ὄχλος, (*ho polus ochlos*), Mark unquestionably meant as nearly what we mean by 'the million,' 'the masses,' 'the common people,' as it is possible to express his meaning in our language. He did not intend merely to say that a great many people listened with pleasure to Christ on that occasion; but that a great many comparatively unintelligent and unlikely people — the populace — heard him gladly.

One word on this adverb which informs us how they heard — ἡδέως, (*hēdeōs*). Homer often uses the adjective whose sense it takes, to express the palatable quality of wine, and Xenophon applies it to the enjoyment of pleasant food; and Mark transfers it here, almost without a figure, to convey the analogous effect of intellectual and spiritual aliment upon the multifarious auditors of Jesus. The words of Christ's preaching were, to the common people of Judah, as David says the judgments of the Lord were to him — "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." To borrow the pertinent thought of an old French commentator, Louis De Dieu, the sense of the whole is that "while the Pharisees, and the Scribes, and the principal people among the Jews held Christ in contempt, the common people loved to hear him."

Our text — thus justified in its familiar sense — suggests, for our consideration, a principle and an inquiry; the principle — that, humanly speaking, the success of the Gospel in this world must mainly depend upon the ability of those who preach it to gain the ear and heart of the masses of the people; the inquiry — how may the preachers of the Gospel most successfully imitate

their great Master in procuring the common people to hear them gladly ?

Let us first examine the principle.

I. *Leaving out of the account the agency of the Holy Spirit, the success of the Gospel on earth must mainly depend, so far as human instrumentality is concerned, upon the ability of its preachers to make the common people hear them gladly.*

In its very essence it is a Gospel for the common people — having special adaptation for them, and a special mission to them — so that to fail of reaching them would be to fail of success. Preaching the Gospel to the poor, is placed by Matthew on a par with miracles, as an evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus, and in demonstration that His is the true religion. The religion of all previous time had either rejected or neglected them. In all the ancient classics, I do not remember one line that pleads for them. Even the elegant and tender Horace could say, "I hate the vulgar crowd, and keep them at a distance." And the amiable and philosophic Cicero declares it as his opinion that "the employments in which men engage for hire, especially those requiring mere manual labor, are all base. The pay received by such is the pay of the slave. . . . In short, all workmen ply base callings." *

Says a recent historian,† "In life and death, the distinction [between the rich and the poor] continued. The rich man went clad, for instance, in the *toga*. The poor man wore the *tunic*. He sat in lowly places, look-

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* Cic. De Officiis, I. 42.

† Eliot's Ancient Romans, Vol. II. p. 316.

ing up to the rich alike at the festival and at the tribunal. In the shade of the latter's palace, the poor had the street, or his scarcely more comfortable lodging for a home. His struggles over, he was carried forth by night, as if his burial were a disgrace to the city."

The Pharisee called the uneducated multitude "accursed." Even the Jewish ritual made a difference — not as before God, but as before men — between the humble suppliant whose means were exhausted in the gift of a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, and the wealthier worshiper who could bring to the altar the firstlings of the flock and of the herd.

From Eden to Bethlehem, from Adam to Christ, there had not been on earth any Gospel for the poor. But Jesus was born into the ranks of poverty. His cradle was a manger. His mother's sacrifice, when she presented him in the temple, was of the humblest sort. His young hands toiled for bread. He learned, and for years lived by, the trade of a house carpenter. And when he went about his Father's business, and taught the multitudes among the hills of Judea, and by the lake-side of Galilee, he had not where to lay his head, and satisfied his hunger from day to day, from the labor of his disciples, or the gifts of friends.

Being such in his humanity, his Gospel naturally flowed forth upon that level of life on which he moved. Himself a poor man, he preached glad tidings to the poor, and they received them as from one congenial to them. He did not refuse to teach the rich because they were rich, nor did he mitigate the terms of salvation to the poor, because they were poor; but ignoring social distinctions, he preached to all men, rich and

poor, as if they were just only men, who, whatever their earthly circumstances, must live and die, be saved or lost, as *men*. Yet he had a fellow-feeling with those whose great battle of life is for food convenient for them, and he specially unfolds the great things of God so as to meet *their* necessities. In their orphanage and solitude he teaches them to look up into the prophetic sky and confidently plead: "*Our* Father which art in heaven." In their sore struggle for sustenance he bids them cry: "give *us* this day our daily bread." And when the sharp stones of life's pathway gore their feeble feet, and its thorns tear the flesh under their garments, and the voice of Satan calls: 'come over among these flowers and eat these pleasant fruits,' he assures them of kind and swift answer when they pray: "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" while everywhere and always he throws over their rugged lot the hopeful sunshine streaming down from that better country, that is an heavenly; where 'the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest, where the prisoners hear no longer the voice of the oppressor, where the small are with the great, and the servant is free from his master.' Such being the Religion which the Saviour — anointed of God 'to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised,' — came to organize and energize for the renovation of the earth; it is clear that from its very essence its success must be involved in its ability to reach and raise up the masses of the people. Such a Gospel is, in itself, a failure if the common people do not hear it gladly.

The same conclusion becomes inevitable when we consider that, in the nature of things, the world will always be mainly composed of 'common people.' 'The poor ye have always with you;' they 'shall never cease out of the land.' As the face of the earth itself is slowly tending toward a general symmetry, the mountain cliffs disintegrating and tumbling down with winter's frost, and the hills wearing away under the abrasion of streams and storms, and the ravines rising upon the tribute of the hills; so doubtless the sharper inequalities of social life are becoming mitigated under the gradual forces at work upon them. But as we never expect the globe to assume perfect roundness, so we have no reason to anticipate any such modification of the social condition of mankind, as that its incalculable majority shall not always be, comparatively, of the 'common people.' If the Gospel, then, does not attract them, it must have, numerically, moderate success.

Add to this the obvious fact that the masses are, on the one hand, peculiarly exposed to all temptations to vice and irreligion and erroneous belief, and, on the other, guarded most imperfectly by intelligence and culture to resist them, and it becomes yet more clear that a system of religious teaching which does not specially consider and adapt itself to their prejudices and necessities — which is not even better fitted to touch and teach and transform them, than other men — must necessarily fail, in great part, to do the work which humanity is waiting to have done by God's merciful interposition here.

It is however a cheering fact, overbalancing whatever is discouraging in this consideration, that the 'common

people,' if most exposed to the seductions of the enemies of the Gospel, are yet also naturally most open to the force of its appeals. Their minds are less preoccupied by schemes of ambition, their consciences less benumbed with the opiates of worldliness, their moral natures less enervated by the seductions of sense. This world — with its hard struggle, every day renewed, for the means of subsistence — does not seem to them so alluring as to invite their eternal continuance, and thrust itself between their eyes and all pictures of 'the rest that remaineth,' prompting them to say — as one of the merchant princes of New England is reported to have done — "Beacon Street is heaven enough for me!"

To this principle, that the success of the Gospel in this world must mainly depend upon its power of conquest over the minds of the 'common people,' experience has set its seal. 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.' The great majority of every Christian Church is usually composed of those who are neither wise, nor wealthy, nor mighty, with the wisdom and wealth and might of this world. Humble day-laborers, faithful servants, lowly and conscientious toilers along obscure and narrow paths, poor widows, and lonely orphans, these — if we may trust the records that lie under our eye, to indicate the annals of the Church in

all its ages — have made up the incalculable majority of those who have believed, and therefore spoken, who have been found faithful in that which they promised, and have received the crown of glory that fadeth not away in heaven. How few, in the bright history of the achievements of grace, — how few the names that come down to us from the distant centuries, as having belonged to men of note in their generations. We admire the story of the Christian faithfulness of those who have borne the burden and the heat, but we admire those who, so far as the annals of wealth and power and place are concerned, were always nameless and unknown. "Where are they, the army of martyrs, who soaked the sand of the Roman circus with their blood? Who fed the fires of Smithfield with their life? Whose bones whitened the valleys of Piedmont, the marshes of the Low Countries, or the heath-covered hills of Scotland? No pious hand gathered their ashes. No monumental marble records their names and their constancy. The world has forgotten them. It never knew them. But were they unknown? Did they perish? Are they forgotten? O for one moment of that light which shone upon the dying Stephen, and we should see them close around the throne of the Lamb that was slain for them, and for whom they died, radiant with the beauty of blessedness incorruptible, the most noble host of the sons of God." *

It is impossible to look over the churches of Christ as they now are, or to glance back at their annals as they have been from the beginning, without reaching

* Bethune. Sermons, (1846), p. 84.

the conclusion that — while the Gospel excludes no man, and has nearly always had the willing and worthy service of some of high intellectual capacity, and broad culture, and extended influence — there must yet be some special adaptation of its principles to the condition of those who are humble in their earthly circumstances, and obscure in their worldly position, or the common people would not always have heard it so gladly. And it needs no further argument to prove that the preacher of the Gospel is bound to seek especially to adapt his ministrations to this fact; and so to labor in things spiritual as to gain the ear and win the heart of the masses to the truth he brings.

We advance, then, to the inquiry which the text suggests: —

II. *How may those who administer the Word procure the 'common people' to 'hear them gladly?'*

They must preach as the Saviour preached, and — since 'the life is more than meat,' — they must live as the Saviour lived. Upon certain more obvious details under this general reply, it is hardly needful for me to dwell, and I pass at once to name others which claim some special unfolding.

1. The preachers of the Gospel ought to mingle with the common people as Christ did. Though he was high, yet had he respect unto the lowly. "Every condition of society was open to his choice, and human taste would have selected a state of wealth, and rank, and worldly influence; but this would have removed him from the society of the people; whereas his object was to make himself one with *them*. He selected others to assist him in preaching the kingdom of

heaven; but he asked not philosophy to argue in its defence, nor poetry to sing its praise, nor eloquence to pour forth its oratory, nor royalty to clothe it with state, or arm it with power. The instrumentality he employed was of the humblest order; was, like himself, 'raised up from among the people,' and therefore adapted to gain the attention of the people." * Cradled among the beasts — because his mother's poverty made 'no room for them in the inn' — trained among the young Nazarenes of lowliest life, and growing up to manhood surrounded by all the associations which cluster around a poor man's dwelling, Christ ever made the common people mainly his associates and intimates. Thus, when he preached to them, it was as brother talking to brother, and friend to friend. He knew what was in man, not merely because he had a divine insight, but because he mingled with men who were not masked by position, or solicited by any unnatural stimulus to attempt to be, or seek to seem, different from what they were.

He who desires so to imitate the Great Master that he may gain a like glad hearing from the multitude, must move among that multitude as an equal, a brother, and a friend. He must familiarize himself, by actual contact, with all the peculiar moods of mind, and phases of heart, and movements of conscience, of the common people. He must plant himself in that plane in which they live, and move, and have their being, so as to put his soul in their soul's stead — and take cognizance of the driftings of their prejudices, and the

* Harris' "Great Teacher." p. 255.

gusts of their passions, and the inertia of their unbelief; knowing, by acute and flexile sympathy, their dangers and difficulties, their hopes and fears, the processes of their minds, and the avenues to their hearts, so that being 'made all things to all men, he may by all means save some.' Something, indeed, may be gained in this direction from books, by those who know how to study them with discrimination, but those volumes which are crowded fullest of that honest human nature which is, and which needs the preacher's labor, are the folios of streets, and the quartos of markets, and saloons, and halls, and warehouses, and the duodecimos of firesides; and that man who can read these with most profit for his work, will preach the sermons that the common people will most throng to hear. There is a sturdy common sense resident in the masses, which eschews all shams and make-believes, and which scorns all fine things whose fine blossoms never ripen into any fruit; and he who has mingled with the masses enough to become saturated with that sense, and who shapes his pulpit appeals continually in the thought of it, and by the help of it, will be surest to sway the common mind by his logic, and to fire the common heart by his appeals; while, at the same time — since

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," —

more likely than if pursuing an opposite course, to move also those of broader culture and higher taste who may be among his auditors. It were as absurd for the physician to attempt to prescribe for the varying maladies of his patients without going to see them, and without any effort to find out what particular phase of

disease demands his treatment, as for the preacher to think of saving the masses by means of a pulpit that has ignored the people, and consequently has no accurate and experimental knowledge of the work which it is called upon to perform. The preacher must 'go out into the highways and hedges' where the multitude are, if he would 'compel them to come in,' that God's house may be full, and Satan be defrauded of those who 'are taken captive by him at his will.' "The three great books for a minister to study," said one of the old Puritans, "are the Bible, himself, and the people." And a modern divine has added: "he who studies the people most, will usually preach to them best." The truth of this remark has found illustration in the history of many of the most eminent preachers in the annals of the Church. It is on record of that wonderful man who preaches to more people in London every Sabbath than twenty other ministers, that during the early period of his labors, he was accustomed to make his home at the houses of the villagers, until he had gone round to nearly every cottage in Waterbeach. It is no secret that that pulpit orator in our own country who stands preëminent among his brethren as a preacher to the masses, gets his best logic and his most suasive appeals at the street corners, and out among the crowd. And we all remember how that voice * (whose echoes have hardly died away from this hall,) which proclaims God's Gospel of temperance to the multitude with such amazing eloquence and pathos, told us that its training had not been from the printed page, but from long contact with the people in real life.

* John B. Gough.

2. But the preacher who would make the common people hear him gladly, must not merely mingle with, and understand them, he must love them, and have faith in them. Christ had such an intense consciousness of spiritual and eternal realities, that when he gazed upon a man, he looked straight through the body to the indwelling spirit, merging this palpable life that now is, in that which is to come. Estimating all things preëminently by their eternal significance and value, a soul with a king's robes adorning its inclosing form of flesh was to his eye no different from a soul that was finding brief and scanty shelter here in the despised and diseased body of some mendicant Lazarus. The *soul* — immortal, with high and holy possibilities, with dreadful dangers — drew his love; and wherever he saw a soul — without waiting to consider in what rank its body moved, or with what earthly splendor, or abjectness, that body met the gaze of men — he loved it, and pitied it, because it was a soul; just as the dealer in precious stones values his great white diamonds for themselves, without even considering whether they are contained, for the time being, in a casket of gold, or in the commonest paper box. And it was Christ's love for the souls of the masses with whom he mingled, and his faith that they would respond to his appeals, which gave that tender unction to his tones, that sympathizing sense to his logic, and that overwhelming power to his entire manner, which made the common people hear him gladly.

They who would imitate him in the result must imitate him also in the process by which it was reached. It is not enough to know, thoroughly, the mental condition

of the multitude. One must feel confidence in their general fealty to truth; in the probability of their 'hearing to reason,' before he can with usefulness reason with them; and he will be sure to fail, if all his arguments do not glow with unaffected love; desiring nothing so much as the salvation of their souls. The tear-drop of honest sympathy will steal its way through the joints of a coat of mail, which a battle-ax might batter in vain.

3. He who would make the common people hear him gladly, must ignore all social distinctions, which are founded upon any thing else than intellectual and spiritual worth. The Bible is addressed to men as intelligent immortals, and in its sight there is no difference in essence between a rich immortal and a poor immortal; an immortal merchant and an immortal mechanic; an immortal prince and an immortal pauper. All alike are warned by it to use aright their special powers and privileges, to resist the temptations peculiar to their positions, to live above the world while they live in it, to remember that 'the first' here is in danger of being 'the last' in the kingdom, and to withstand the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The only distinction of which it makes account is 'between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.' We have already recalled the fact that Christ's love for men was for them *as men*, so that Nicodemus, though he was 'a ruler of the Jews,' and Joseph of Arimathea, though he was 'an honorable counsellor,' were not welcomed by him to so tender a fellowship as he accorded to Peter and John the illiterate fishermen of Galilee, and to Matthew the

despised publican; who did not come to him by night, and did not wait till he was dead, before they publicly honored him.

Any preaching of the Gospel which seeks to have power over the multitude, must accord with this spirit of the Bible, and this example of our Lord, in recognizing and appealing to the essential elements of humanity, and not to its accidents of position, and its incidents of culture. He who should look from the sun upon this earth-ball, would fail to detect any difference of level between Chimborazo and Sahara — from that far hight all inequalities being melted into the roundness of a smooth and compact globe; so the eye that Heaven fixes on man discerns no social hight nor depth; and the preacher who comes in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, will look on man with Heaven's eye. He will speak the things of the kingdom to all men alike, convincing all alike of guilt, beseeching all alike to repentance, and pointing all alike to the cross that goes before the crown. And just so far as the Church of Christ with which he labors, seize the genuine spirit of the Gospel, and effectually coöperate with him in his work, they will 'know no man after the flesh;' they will 'have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons;' and if a man 'come into their sanctuary having a gold ring and goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment,' they will not say to him that weareth the gay clothing: 'sit thou here, in a good place,' and say to the poor: 'stand thou there, or sit here under the footstool,' because they know that poor men coming to the house of the God

of consolation will not be won by being despised; and because they remember that, if God's multiplication of promises are any proof of special love, the people whom he thinks of most, and loves best, are 'the poor of this world, rich in faith,' whom he hath made 'heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.'

No preacher can have much success in his labors among people who do not thoroughly respect him, and the common people have too much sense to respect that minister of the everlasting Gospel — assuming to be an ambassador of the Prince of Peace — whom they see giving three quarters of his thoughts, and preaching three quarters of his sermons, and making three quarters of his visits, and sacrificing three quarters of his manhood, to half a dozen men of wealth and fashion and political influence, who condescend, — during good behavior on his part — to honor his meeting-house with their (occasional) presence.

4. He who desires the common people to hear him gladly, must preach in a practical manner. I had it in mind to say, rather, that he must preach on practical themes; but I remember that any theme is practical, that is treated practically. There is at least some slender thread of influence that runs straight from every possible doctrine to every human life. God's works are so wonderfully interwoven, that there is no truth which has not some relation to all his creatures; so that any truth may be made practical to any man when it is discussed in such a manner that he can understand it, and feel the force of it, as a motive or a guide. That is a mistaken and harmful notion which distin-

guishes preaching into doctrinal and practical, as if the discussion of ideas and practices were radically different; and as if any merely abstract study of principles — having no more visibly direct relation to the every-day life of men, than a cord of dry wood has to a green and waving forest — can be preaching the Gospel at all. Christ never is recorded to have preached any such 'doctrinal' sermons. His appeals were concrete, direct, practical. Some of those topics which are held by many to be the very vitalest essence of a pure Gospel, he does not appear ever to have made the subject of discourse. He spoke often of God, and of his Fatherhood, of his love of holiness, and his hatred of sin; of man, his immortality, accountability, and lost condition; of the reconciliation of God with man, through penitence and faith; of Satan's power; of the resurrection and the final judgment; but I think no man can turn to any report of a sermon from his lips devoted to any scientific discussion of Decrees, or Predestination, or Perseverance, or find even any hint from him of such an anatomical dissection and desiccation of divine truth, as fills many a folio that has come down in the great libraries, like a withered nut in its shell, from the School-men, and many an octavo which orthodoxy has voted 'safe,' and the multitude has voted 'husks,' that the very swine do not eat, and that never, even by contrast, put one prodigal son to thinking of the forsaken food of his father's house. Some men indeed have received from the all-wise Creator minds that cannot help acting upon truth as some fluids do upon some salts — first dissolve, and then crystallize them. Let such men rejoice in all manner

of philosophy, let them riot among the dry bones of dead systems of the past; perchance they may extract from them a little phosphorus that may feebly shine upon the future, or a little phosphate that may fertilize its furrows. Let them work, for so long as they are faithful to their Creator's design for them, they cannot go wrong. But let not the preacher who desires to move and save the masses, imagine that it will be done by preaching sermons that are great with any such anatomical greatness as theirs. The multitude will not listen long to that which they cannot comprehend, even though all the college-taught men in the pews say that it is 'profound preaching.' They want to be told something which they can make use of; something which will guide, cheer, stimulate, strengthen them; and that which their minds cannot understandingly digest, cannot assimilate into their moral and spiritual nutriment.

Hence the most practical preachers have always been the most popular ones. Men turned away, in the old time, from the splendors of Westminster Abbey, and the pageantry of the first St. Paul's, to crowd a plain conventicle where the unlettered lips of John Bunyan dispensed a practical Gospel which went straight home to their hearts and consciences; and men now turn away from the same Westminster Abbey, and pass by New St. Paul's, to throng an unconsecrated hall where a modern Baptist — who has drunk deep of the plain old Dreamer's spirit — thrusts straight into their hearts and consciences the same eternal, practical teachings that were of old, and will always be, 'the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation.'

5. He who would gain a glad hearing from the

common people must profusely illustrate the doctrine which he preaches. An illustration is a truth presented in a concrete form; addressing the reason through the senses and the imagination — as when the idea of the danger of self-deception is made vivid by the picture of the house built on the sand; or the general Providence of God illustrated by the Divine care of the fowls of the air, and the lilies of the field. The dull mind is greatly aided to comprehend principles by this manner of presenting them, and any mind is led on insensibly to a deeper interest in that which is thus made to appeal to the feelings as well as the understanding. Hence that audience which listens dozily to the unfolding of the principles of the Gospel in the form of dry abstract propositions, supported by equally dry abstract considerations, will wake up to eager, even tearful attention, when the voice that was so frigid with the monotone of pure logic, slides into the livelier, warmer region of intonations that express something that has actually happened — or may happen; something that has what farmers call 'the good earth-smell' of real life about it; something that stirs the blood, and wakes up the whole being to receive the suggestion which it makes as one with which the actual life of each auditor has something to do. Children love 'stories' because their immature minds cannot relish — can hardly begin to grasp — abstract truth; and the masses are like children in this preference for truth illustrated, over truth merely stated.

Our Saviour well understood this, and hence his style of preaching was very largely figurative. His parables are the most marked feature of his recorded

addresses; more than one half, probably, of all his utterances which are preserved to us, having been of this description. It was precisely because, in this manner, he made the truth so vivid and impressive, that, as Luke tells us, 'all the people were very attentive to hear him' [literally — 'hung upon his lips.'] And the preacher who would secure a like eager attention from the multitude, must speak to them not merely in a practical manner, but, in the constant use of parable and metaphor and simile and incident, he must flash his meaning upon their minds, so that they cannot mistake it when they listen to it, and cannot help listening to it when within the sound of it. That is a most woful folly which has possessed some eminent men — alike in the pulpit and the pews, — namely: that a highly intellectual style of preaching must abjure this concrete and illustrative element, and dwell mainly in the region of metaphysical subtleties; as if preaching, like the atmosphere, will grow thin and dry in proportion as it rises above the average level. Daniel Webster is recorded to have said that the most gratifying compliment which he ever received for his powers of oratory, was from the lips of a plain farmer, who grasped his hand, on the conclusion of one of his great arguments at the bar, saying, with glistening eye: "I liked you very much, Sir, *for I understood every word that you uttered!*" I doubt if any thing can be better praise than this for the preacher, or if he can gain it in any better manner than by using freely his power of illustrating the truth which he presents.

6. That preacher who desires to make the common people hear him gladly, must be thoroughly in earnest

in his work. A 'terrible earnestness' has often given irresistible power to the orator who has lacked many other important qualifications. The masses are too shrewd to be moved by the perfunctory performances of him who preaches because it is one way of earning bread, and he has agreed to do it — so many sermons for so many loaves; or of him who preaches because the ministry is a reputable employment for a man who must be somebody, and does not wish to be a lawyer, and does not care to be a doctor, and so pours upon the world through the pulpit the respectability that lacks another channel; or of any man whose heart is not in the work, and who is not compelled as the Apostle was, by the inward agony of a spirit driven by conscience, as well as drawn by love to the souls of men to say, — "wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." A loud cry surcharged with human emotion will make any man pause, anywhere. It may be very hard, very coarse, very unwinning, but if it have the intonation of a soul crying out in its agony for something dear, it will arrest the busiest, most careless, multitude. And when there is added to this the element of disinterestedness; when this cry of agonized emotion is seen to have its birth in the utterer's benevolent desire to save others from something dreadful which he sees and they do not see, it becomes sublime in the thrill which it sends through the soul. Such a thrill has often been the secret of the power of the earnest preacher over the multitude, and he who is not prepared — nay, compelled, to shape unconsciously his every-day appeals into something of this honest earnestness, need not expect to gain the common ear and heart.

Finally. That ministry which would permanently secure a glad hearing from the common people, must shape itself to meet their necessities in all its collateral arrangements. The task which is set before the preacher is the most difficult that falls to the lot of intellectual laborers, in that he is compelled to address substantially the same audience, perpetually, upon substantially the same theme. Men would go once to hear a pleasant and persuasive speaker, if they must needs all stand under the vault of heaven while he speaks. They might go a few times to hear him in some place where hard benches and foul air made listening a physical penance, and even danger. They might go a few times where luxurious seats, and all manner of comfort was offered — at a price wholly out of proportion with their pecuniary ability. But the preacher who desires to gain a permanent hearing from the masses of the people, must invite them to listen where all needful accessories of comfort and fitness and even beauty are offered, at a cost which will not make Church-going their only extravagance.

Moreover, since spiritual themes are not in themselves winsome to depraved human nature, and since the world holds out its gilded baits of sense on every corner, it becomes also important that preaching should be associated with other labors, and the sanctuary connected with other means of attraction and influence. In such a community as that in which our lot is cast, Sabbath Schools for adults and children, social services in the week-time of an intellectual as well as spiritual cast, frequent special efforts to bind a worshiping assembly together with the bands of neighborly as well

as Sabbath interest, — all tending to concentrate the affection of the multitude, and especially of the young, around the Church and the ministry as a center of perennial comfort and instruction, become of vast import. That preacher — otherwise properly endowed — who mingles with the multitude,* ignoring factitious distinctions, who loves and trusts them, who preaches practically to them on whatever theme, who vivifies the truth by illustrations manifold, and who speaks to

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* Mr. Spurgeon says, in a recent letter to the Boston *Watchman*: —

"It is my firm belief that the salvation of London will not come from our colleges and seats of learning, but from her dens and haunts of poverty. I look for an army of converted sinners from St. Giles and Whitechapel; men whose fury in sin will be exchanged for energy in righteousness, whose gratitude for pardon will endow them with hearts of fire, and whose acquaintance with the language of the masses will give them tongues of fire. Books may educate ministers for the polite; only experience and study of men can prepare a man to touch the heart of the masses. We need preachers who will study, not their shelves, but the streets and lanes; not paper and printing alone, but human nature in all its varied developments. The division between the ministry and the people is far too wide; they will never be moved by professional skill; the orator of the mass must be bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. My own success, under God, is due to a sympathy with humanity, and an observant eye which delights rather to view man than man's works. This is not attainable by any amount of research among our learned tomes. We must walk the hospitals, if we would be surgeons, and we must mingle with the people if we would reach their hearts. The language of the class-room is not the speech of the people, and if we would be understood, we must leave our high stilts behind us, and walk on their level, thinking and speaking as one of themselves. We need converted prize-fighters and regenerated burglars to reach their fellow-criminals; and sweeps, cobblers, street-sweepers, and such like, will be the right raw material for mighty preachers of the truth. Only Thou, O Lord, put to Thine hand! Do not imagine that I depreciate a regular education; on the other hand, I own its utility; but for the vast mass, something else is needed, and I have tried to indicate it."

them as one thoroughly in earnest to save their souls — if he have also the great advantage of welcoming them to hear him in some pleasant place where all needful comforts are offered to them at a cost within their easy ability, and if he be surrounded and aided by yoke-fellows who are ever on the watch — with smiling greetings and the warm right-hand of fellowship — for the coming of the poor man and the stranger, and who specially seek to concentrate around the place of prayer the interest of the young — making it seem to them, amid the loneliness of the great city, the nearest to that distant home which is the dearest spot in all the earth; so that they can almost say with David's words, "blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts and be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple," and so that their soul, through all the toil and sweat and dust of the week, "longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord;" — *such* a preacher may hope, not in vain, to make the common people hear him gladly, and, when he stands to give account at last, to be able to spread his hands out over a great multitude saved even out of the lowly places of earth, and from the haunts of vice and infamy, saying, with a humble, yet rejoicing heart, — 'Lord here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me!'

XII.

THE LORD THE BUILDER.*

PSALM CXXVII: 1.

EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEY LABOR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT.

WHAT other, what better, could David have said for *us?* How meet and right it is, that, standing — after our long, long struggle, with all its weariness and painfulness, with all its mingling hopes and fears, and all its multiplied anxieties and corroding cares — at last, in the face of overbalancing probabilities against us, on the threshold of success in our endeavor to erect a temple for God's worship, where the rich and the poor may meet together to adore him who is the maker of them all; we should devoutly and most gratefully recognize that unseen hand which has led us on, and that invisible power which has moved mountains of difficulty out of our path, and that benedictive presence which has breathed blessings, — sometimes cheeringly recognizable, sometimes in some dark, though brief, disguise — upon us all along the way, and by whose

* Williams Hall, April 15, 1860.

continuous sympathy alone, even now, can the work be carried forward, until the topstone shall be lifted into its place with shoutings of 'grace unto it!'

Oh! beloved! let us deeply feel it; let us most reverently, most humbly, most rejoicingly say it: 'not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy great name be the praise of this good work which is done for us. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul, then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He hath turned again our captivity as the streams in the south. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it!'

The text invites us to a consideration of the methods by which God brings about the accomplishment of his purposes on earth — a subject general in its character, while susceptible, at every point, of directly connecting itself with whatever specially interests us in our own history.

The old Latin maxim, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, 'from nothing, nothing comes,' is the starting point in all our reasonings concerning God's work on earth. It is obvious to the most casual and careless glance, that the world is full of *something* — full of things, persons, events; full of thinking, feeling, acting; full of life — vegetable, animal, human, corporeal, and spiritual; all

of which must, in the first place, be accounted for, if the world had any author, and, in the second place, must be shaped and controlled, if the world has any governor. It cannot have sprung from nothing — for 'from nothing, nothing comes' — it must therefore be due to some positive force acting first upon, and then through it. That force must have intelligence in order to impart intelligence to the work of its hand; and all the wise, and curious, and intricate phenomena of the universe testify that nothing short of an infinite intelligence could have poured such streams of power and wisdom along the channels of creation. That infinite intelligence we call God.

Now if God have ever so much power wisely to create, it is plain that he must, nevertheless, necessarily fail to secure any permanent control over his universe, unless he have also the power wisely to guide his creatures after their wise creation; for the power to create anew, would not counterbalance the danger of the misuse and malversation of the old. That general alone has power over his army, who can not only bring into it, on occasion, new recruits, well equipped and rightly drilled, but who can also always and everywhere control every movement of the entire force, saying to this one 'go,' and to that one 'come,' without so much as a possible peradventure to thrust itself between his command and their instant and complete obedience. And so it is impossible for the human mind to conceive of this world as being governed by God — as it most obviously is governed by Him; and of being shaped — as it most clearly is shaped by him — continually with the directest aim toward far future results, without coming to the

conclusion that every creature, not merely, but every event in which any creature has a part, and every thing, upon which any creature acting produces, or can produce, any modification of that event, is in the power of God, and is so controlled by him that the result of all these mingling activities, and the blending of all these converging forces shall be just what he foresaw and forechose.

Any governing that did not amount to this, would be imperfect governing, weak in its processes, and uncertain in its results; unstable as water, it could not excel; it would not be the Lord's work, neither could it be marvellous in our eyes. Any Governor upon the throne of the universe who should not always, and under all conceivable circumstances, know, not only what his will would be, in any given contingency, but how to carry out that will to the last iota of accomplishment — subsidizing thereto (if needful to that end,) every thought and every affection and every volition of every living creature, with every force in nature, and every fibre of the world; would not be an infinitely wise and powerful ruler; would not be Him in whom we live and move and have our being; would not be that God of Providence and Grace who — when his own good time is come — shall, ultimately, bruise Satan under his feet, and win from the white-robed myriads of Heaven the jubilant acclaim — 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name — for thy judgments are made manifest; and thou hast put it into men's hearts to fulfil thy will. Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!'

All this, now, is very plain so far as inanimate things are concerned. There is no difficulty in any man's conceiving that an omnipotent God can control blind and unreasoning matter — turning it whithersoever he listeth. That, mere power to move unresisting atoms can do. The difficulty is in conceiving how God's omnipotence can, as surely, effect its conquest and control over reasonable and reasoning creatures — the very first and cardinal principle of whose divinely organized nature is that they shall be free, under all circumstances, to choose, at their pleasure; who are constituted beings, in fact, and not machines, by their possession of this very faculty of choice — which can never be coerced or taken away, so long as they remain true to God's idea of their proper life. The difficulty is in seeing how God can control them without force, and how he can force them without destroying that very essential principle of their nature which he gave them as its crowning glory, and which therefore he never can be supposed willingly to take from them.

The only solution which we can suggest for this mystery is that which grows out of the consideration that the mind of man is always susceptible to the power of motive — while God's omniscient omnipotence can both discern, in all cases, what motive presented to the mind will lead it to choose as He would have it choose, and can bring that motive (whatever it may be) to bear upon it, so as to produce the choice. Thus God can as infallibly secure those results which he desires from his intelligent creation, by arraying before it such motives as will be sure to make it first wish to do, and then decide to do, and then do his pleasure, as he can

from his unintelligent creation by the direct and unresisted pressure of his molding and moving hand. And still the liberty of man is preserved, because no force is applied to his will; it is not compelled, it is only convinced and persuaded freely to choose to do what it might decline to do — only that, as it looks at the matter, such declining would be against its own best interests, and those interests it is not natural for it to decide against.

The methods by which God brings about the accomplishment of his purposes on earth — since those purposes include and shape matter and mind — are, simply, then, the methods by which he shapes matter and mind, so as to elaborate from them separately, and from their interworking, whatever result it is his pleasure to secure. Let us look at these a little in detail.

1. When God wishes to accomplish any purpose, he shapes toward the result which he desires, all those blind forces of nature which have in them any coöperation with it. When He wishes to give the peace of plenty to any land, he sendeth forth his commandment into the air, and up to the sun, and forth to the winds, and out upon the seas, and along the furrows of the soil; and his word runneth very swiftly to all genial and fertilizing influences, and they obey his behest with their marrow and fatness, and so he fills its borders with the finest of the wheat. And when the rigors of winter are a needful preliminary to any work of his, he giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes, and casteth forth his ice like morsels, until no man can stand before his cold. And when that work is done, and milder airs are more salubrious for his design, then

he sendeth out his word and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. And so fire, and hail, and snow, and vapor, and stormy wind fulfil his word; and mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, praise the Lord by performing his decree which they cannot pass.

This mute obedience and subordination of the material forces of the world to the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, forms a very striking feature of the visible government of God over men — though, from the necessity of the case, needing for its secure interpretation, often, the light of subsequent history. The deluge; the fate of the cities of the plain; the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine; the ten plagues in Egypt; the parting of the tides of the Red Sea, and afterward of the Jordan; the gift of manna; Balaam and his beast; the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua; the fleece of Gideon — wringing wet while the earth around was dry, and dry while dew was on all the ground; the pestilence which followed David's numbering of the people; the flame leaping down upon the sacrifice of Elijah, and the rain that followed his prayers, and the fire that consumed the messengers of Ahaziah; the iron that swam at the word of Elisha; the starlight that guided the Magi to the manger where Christ's earthly life began, and the gloom that overshadowed the earth when that life had reached its agonized ending; the fiery vision that blinded the eyes of Saul on the Damascus road, and the viper-bite which did not harm him when his name was Paul — these all speak,

out of the sacred record, in accumulated testimonies that it is the opening of the Lord's hand which satisfieth the desire of every living thing, that it is that which He gives them which they gather, that in his hand are the deep places of the earth, and the strength of the hills is His also ; that he turneth all his mute creation whithersoever he listeth.

Take a single passage of familiar history, and note how (from this distance of time, with the light which the result throws back upon it) the forces of material nature seem to have been Divinely swayed to aid in producing the result. Take the emigration of our Pilgrim Fathers hither. Go no farther back than Holland and we can see, in the lean and slender sustenance which their most toilsome labors could secure to them there, the gradual formation of one motive by which God led their minds to cast about for some better land. And when they were almost ready for that second exodus which was to transmit them hither, see how God sweeps the shore of Massachusetts Bay clean of savages, by a pestilence, so that there might be foothold for them in their first feebleness, without resort to bow or sword. And then when they were once embarked, and their number was too great, and like Gideon's host needed purging of some who were faint-hearted, and some who were foul-hearted, a great storm bursts upon them, and they put back, and leave one of their vessels as unseaworthy, and the wheat is all garnered at last in the little cabin of the Mayflower. And even then 'stormy wind' had another mission to fulfil His word for them. They had sailed for Virginia. But God did not mean for them to land at Virginia. He had not prepared

Virginia for their reception. That was not the soil, nor climate, nor position where he desired the foundations of New England to be laid. So the winds blew again, and the waves beat, and the tides pulled the Mayflower northward, so that all the land that God would let her make, was the low sand-hills of Cape Cod — and so he brought them to his, but not to their desired haven. And thus the blind forces of nature always perform his bidding, and this is one of the methods by which he governs the world.

2. So when God wishes to accomplish any purpose on earth, he sways that intelligence which needs to be brought into coöperation with his design, by motives. This influence is exerted in innumerable forms. Sometimes it is by direct pressure, and by the presence of the immediate and most obvious motive of which the subject will admit; as when he secures the choice, by the sinner of 'that good part which cannot be taken away,' by urging upon his soul the guilt of disobedience, the beauty of holiness, the joy of forgiveness, the danger of delay, or the awfulness of death in sin.

Sometimes it is by a circuitous and indirect approach, that the work is accomplished. Some meteor, in the eventide, flashes its sudden and vanishing brilliance across the arch of heaven; or some white-winged cloud trails its evanescent shade along some sunlit slope, and the mind — so often dull to all teachings — is opened to snatch the moral of the scene, and goes away, sadly reflecting on the dangers that accompany a life that is fitly emblemed by the falling star, and the fleeing shadow. Or the sight of a coffin, or a hearse, or a cemetery — it may be, in some moods, of a church, or

even a Bible — will start the mind upon a train of meditation which the gentle and gracious Spirit may cherish into a motive strong enough to overturn and overturn within the soul until He is enthroned there whose right it is to reign.

Very often it is God's way to effect his purposes not only by processes of motives indirect, but apparently hostile to the result desired, and even at first glance, incompatible with it. Thus, it was God's purpose to consolidate the children of Abraham into a nation that should be a 'peculiar people,' and to ingrain in their minds so deeply a practical faith in himself as the true God and their God, that all the idolatries and temptations of surrounding nations should not be able to shake that faith. So he gave them the bitter nurture of affliction. He turned them over to the abominable cruelties of the taskmasters of Egypt. For scores and scores and scores of years, he left them groaning under acute distress, and sending up their loud and bitter cry. A superficial observation would have inferred his intention miserably to destroy them. But, when his preparations were ready, the reaction came, and the event proved that they had been cemented, by the blood and tears of those bitter years, into a compact and eternal unity, and a substantial nationality, such as no other nation on the earth has ever approximated — such as, in these distant days, and on these remote shores, still draws distinct and clear that ancient line between the Jew and the Gentile; between the Synagogue and the Church.

Very often, too, God's method includes not only processes seemingly at variance with the end sought, but it

uses and overrules motives which are conceived with no reference to the result which, in the end, they secure. Pharaoh had no conception that he was not a free moral agent, in all his dealings with Israel, when he would not let the people go. He was, and he knew he was, a free moral agent. He could, and he knew he could, have decided differently from his actual decision at every step. And it was the very last thing that he would have admitted as being possibly true of himself, that he was freely coöperating with God in accumulating around the children of Israel the needful motive-power to make it safe to launch them upon their desert-wanderings, and their temptations from the wild pagans of Arabia Petræa, and the licentious rovers of the slopes of Canaan. And yet, though he did not once think it in his heart, we can see that He who ruleth all things, and turneth the mind of man as the rivers of water are turned, did use Pharaoh as an unconscious instrument in his hand, and made the wrath of Egypt to praise his great and terrible name. The South Sea islanders are said to have an instrument of death, whose fatal power lies in its recoil; so, many an arrow of motive sent forth from the quiver of God, has done its work only when it has glanced from its apparent mark back to its real, though unsuspected goal. And so the wrath and hostility of man have been made to praise and help Him — who is supreme over all, and who knows how freely to govern the free, making certain that which he desires to do in the world; by making it certain that even his enemies will, of themselves, decide to do all his pleasure.

This being so — the empire of matter and the empire

of mind, being alike in subjection to His pleasure — it follows, since He who can absolutely and entirely control all matter and all mind must be invincible — that God can do any thing which he pleases to do, whatever it may be. He can make a world, or make an unwilling man willing, just as easily as a carpenter can drive a nail — because he knows *how* to do it, and has the means with which to do it, and the power by which to do it.

So it follows, also — since God's control covers all things, and his volitions are the cause of all things — that nothing can be done in this world which God is not pleased to aid, or, at least, to permit. As well might we look to have green fields here, without the rounded earth to hold them up.

'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' If there is to be a house of worship now erected by this people for the future use of ourselves and our children, and the community around us; it is because God has intended to have it built from the very beginning of all his intentions concerning this city which it is to bless, and this Church which it is to shelter. He saw it, with prophetic eye, when the waves were rolling deep over the spot where it shall stand. He saw it when the forest primeval waved over the red man's head upon the three hills that beautified this peninsula in the olden time. He saw it when Wilson and Cotton and the Mathers led our fathers here, in the way of righteousness. He saw it when, a generation ago, that little band — tremulous with just anxieties, yet joyful with a less reasonable hope — laid

the foundation of that house which no longer covers us, and on that altar kindled their vestal fire. He saw it when Skinner came and went; and Brown toiled — sowing with tears what he was never permitted to reap with smiles; and when their amiable and gifted successors, one by one, entered into their labors, and their anxieties, and knew not what should be upon the morrow, or whether should prosper this or that. He saw it when — in three days it will be eleven years ago — the union between us was ratified; and, not knowing for what purpose I was sent, I stood trembling before you. He saw it during all those years — and, when the set time was come, he began to move upon the minds of the people — yours and mine — drawing us hitherward. He put it into our hearts to agree together upon that course of procedure along which, step by step, he has since steadily — though less rapidly than our original hope and expectation had suggested — led us. Let us not, for one moment, doubt that in every one of these delays, he has had a design, as distinct to his own mind as the great central purpose itself, and as salutary for us — in sifting us of all over-hasty suggestions, and all ill-considered methods, and uncongenial helpers, and in fitting us — as he fitted Israel by their Egyptian discipline — by our training here, for a compacter and firmer union and communion, and a more unselfish and heroic fellowship, and a broader and more missionary activity, when rooted in our new field.

'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' Have I not said this to my own heart, time after time, time after time, during these toilsome months since we have been moving toward this hour,

these weary weeks in which, at your direction, I have sought silver in the places of silver, and gold of those who had fine gold, neither have despised any baser metal, out of which we might build a tabernacle for the God of our fathers to dwell in. And have I not said, as dollar after dollar slowly dropped upon the little heap, and it grew day by day — not as the summer flood swells to a torrent when the tempests beat upon the hills, but rather as the round drops slowly trickle from the pendant icicles that the winter sun briefly touches, when it is high noon — have I not said: — 'the Lord *is* building the house, therefore we labor not in vain that build it.'

Yes! yes! It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

To HIM now, and henceforth, be praise!

May His hand — which has been so long shaping the thought of it, and preparing the way before it, and waking up an interest even far away among the distant hills, and along our remoter New England shores, in what it means to be, and to do, in God's service — may that same gracious hand be still outstretched in blessing over us, until, from its deepest foundation to its loftiest hight, our temple shall be a thing accomplished before the eyes of men, as fully as, for these ages past, it has been a thing accomplished in the Divine Plan whose outgrowth it is.

May the blessing of God rest upon every arm that shall be lifted in toil upon it, and on every beam that shall be builded into it, and on every particle of matter that shall go to help make it a holy and beautiful house where we may worship — with something less of care

and cost, and something more of peace and hope — that good and glorious Being whose building of our house has gone before, and will now accompany and include our own.

And unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, be praise; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

AMEN!

687

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